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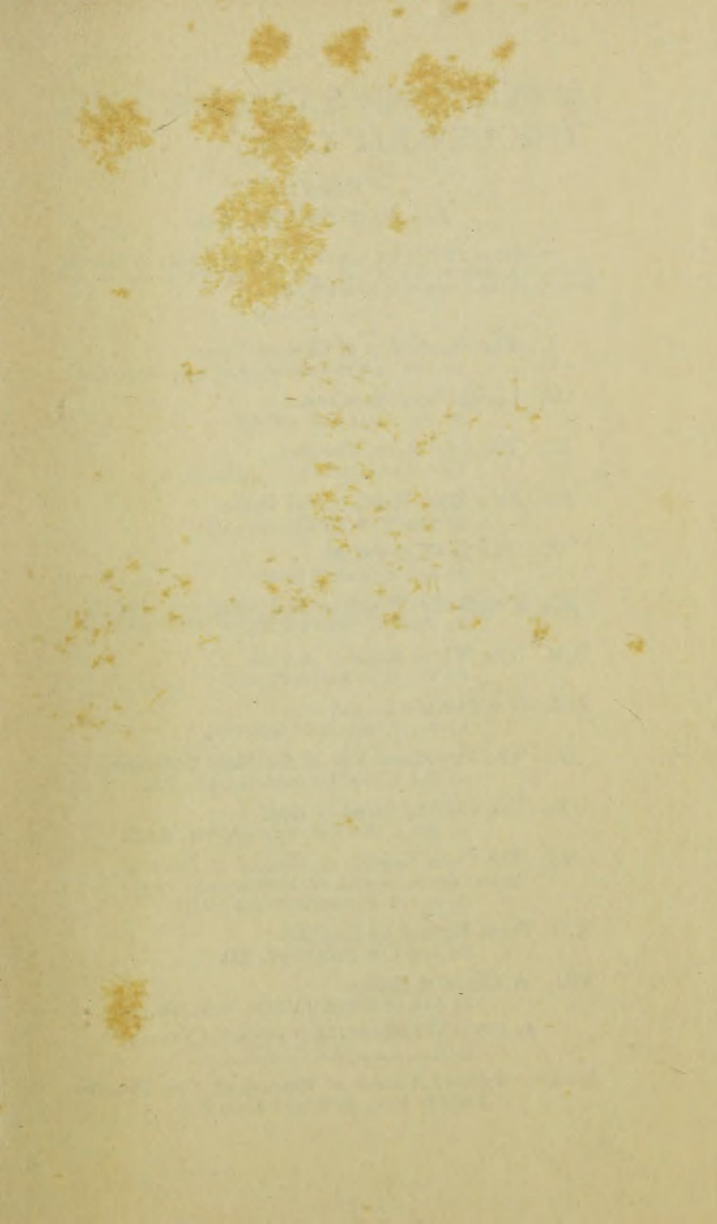
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THE GUIDING HAND OF GOD



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BY

J. RENDEL HARRIS

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SIXTH IMPRESSION

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THE FACT OF DIVINE GUIDANCE

FROM the summit of the Delectable Mountains, a situation famed amongst pilgrims for the clearness of its atmosphere, there stretches in all directions the panorama which one has a right to expect from a mountain of vision. It is a mountain made for pilgrims to climb, and not one that is reserved for the spiritual athlete, a Faulhorn rather than a Mont Blanc ; at an altitude where shepherds may feed their flocks, and after watching the evening star, may sleep amongst them ; in brief, one of those places on the road where the air is delicate and from which one may see far. And when the optic glass of the shepherds has been super-added to the purged eyesight of the wanderer, who can say what that outlook over the land of far distances may mean to those who feed on what they see, and grow strong on

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every fresh realisation of the hope that was set before them?

Upon the top of this mountain (it is called Point Look-out in the local maps) there stands a pillar with inscriptions engraven on its north and south sides. The one that faces the south is a saying of Jesus, "Look with wonder at that which is before you."¹ The other, which is turned towards the north country, is inscribed with a saying of Moses, "Thou shalt remember all the way that the Lord thy God led thee."

The one inscription relates to the

"Dear and future vision
That eager hearts expect";

it advises us of the glories of the place that we call Heaven when we are speaking loftily, and Home when we are talking lowly and naturally; it discourses of the spires and gateways now appearing on the bound of the waste, and encourages fresh confidence that the city is one that hath foundations in the holy mountains.

¹ This saying of Christ is preserved for us by Clement of Alexandria, who says that he took it from a lost book called the "Traditions of Matthias."

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The other inscription tells wayworn men to look back over the place of dragons and the shadow of death, across battle-fields of the past, over places where we were hungry and places where we unduly slept, to that city which sinks below the horizon as the City of God rises above it, the city of Self-Life out of which we were called and which we have, by God's grace, left behind us. And the two inscriptions taken together constitute an oracle of Moses and the Lamb—an oracle which is easily transferred to music, and not less easily in its northern aspect than in its southern. For who can say how much of the motive of the final song of deliverance may turn out to be a composition by one "Retrospect," a servant of the Most High God? His eyesight is just as keen, and as truly purged as the vision of his brother whose name is "Prospect," and the optic glass of the shepherds adds equally to the vision of both. There should be a hymn "Respice" as a companion to Browning's "Prospice." In the present meditation, then, we follow the instruction given to us, and, leaving allegory on one side, we practise ourselves in the remembrance of the way by which God has led us, and *deduce the doctrine of Divine Guidance from the fact that*

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we have been led. And when we have practised ourselves a little in this deduction of doctrine from experience (or, if you prefer it, in the co-ordination of doctrine with experience), we may then take another look at the inscription upon the northern side of the pillar, and you will find that Christ, or some under-shepherd acting for Him, has over-written the Deuteronomic injunction with the words—

“Look with wonder at that which is *behind* you.”

And indeed we begin to suspect that the contemplation of God's leadings in the past, when carried out with due minuteness, will immerse us in wonder, love, and praise, almost as readily as the experience of a newly-attained heaven itself.

But at this point we are checked by an unspoken protest from those who are not so old as ourselves, either in years or in the experience which years bring, that if we deduce the doctrine from the experience we shall be limiting the beginner in his grasp upon a truth which it is desirable he should learn, not only on distant points of prospect, but in the very inception of his pilgrimage. We must not, however, turn the doctrine of

Divine Guidance into a believer's graduation thesis, to be recited when the school breaks up, and it would certainly be wise to introduce a caution as to our method of treatment of this great subject, for even in the handling of great themes we have to remember that our Lord's rule applies that we must be careful not to offend one of the least of those that believe in Him. How, then, shall we get rid of the difficulty which has arisen? May we do it in the following manner?

We will add a postscript to our statement of the doctrine of Divine Guidance, and make it run like this :—

We deduce the doctrine of Divine Guidance from the fact that we have been led; and we have none of us adequately recognised the amount of the raw material of theology that we already possess in our previous leadings.

At this point we may very well illustrate the matter in a way that will make it clear to every one. We are accustomed to pray for light and leading. It is almost a necessary feature of the religious life, and not exclusively Christian. The very first chapter in the Koran would commit every Moslem to it; and the Christian religion cannot, in this regard, be on a lower plane than the Moslem. Most of the prayer which is called the

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Fathah, or Opening, may be said in the mosque of a Christian heart. Very commonly the form that our prayer takes, in recent times, is the line of the hymn—

“Lead, kindly Light.”

If you will follow this hymn through, you will be obliged to admit that the writer speaks from a rich and varied experience of the Divine goodness; he has to sum up the record of his personal retrospect in the words—

“*So long Thy power hath blessed me,*” &c.

If there were no author's name to the hymn, or rather to this verse of the hymn, you would say this is the work of some border-land saint, already in heaven or near it; many years have justified his faith, and the Kindly Light is upon the point of losing itself in the Ineffable Glory. But it is not an old man's hymn at all. It was written by John Henry Newman before the Oxford Movement had begun, and when his youthful freshness was still with him. It is a young man's hymn, that closes with the words, “*So long Thy power hath blessed me.*”

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In reality the hymn has a wide prospect both ways : the first verse says, "I am far from home" : that is a forward glance if not a very clear one ; the last verse says, "*So long* on the homeward journey" ; that savours of far-reaching retrospect ; and we thus acquire the confirmation we were looking for (so far as one clear and striking illustration can give it) in regard to the truth of our statement that, if we knew it, we are all of us sufficiently experienced believers to be expert theologians. And we might even go further, and say that there is a measure of truth in the wider statement that "we may be sufficiently experienced *unbelievers* to have the doctrine of Divine Influence deduced from our personal history" ; certainly there are those of whom the Lord says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me," and "I will lead the blind by a way that they know not." But this is to state the doctrine of Providence and Grace upon another scale than we are at present prepared for. And so let us return to our original doctrine, that there is an Ebenezer stone erected upon the top of Point Look-out, in the Delectable Mountains. And the interpretation of this word is, in English, "Stone of Help" ; it is timeless, like so many things in Hebrew : it

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means "Has helped," "Does help," and "Will help"; its inscription is like the verse in 2 Cor. i. 10, which says, "Delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us"—a verse in which, as I once heard it said, "you have the past, present, and future of the Christian's deliverance."

We can all of us recall the use which has been made of this Ebenezer figure in Robinson's great hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing." From our earliest years we have been in the habit of singing—

"Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy grace I'm come :
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home."

A recent discovery of new verses of the old hymn has brought to light the fact that, in its first utterance, it was meant to be a "border song," like "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide." And we are not concerned to question this point of view; we observe, however, in both the cases referred to, that the Christian Church has catholicised the setting of the hymn, and made it a part of the universal music of believers. Indeed

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I do not know of any hymn-book which has a special old-folks' corner. And a little thought will show the correctness of what we have been trying to say above, that the early stages of the Christian experience as well as the later may properly be described under the terms—

“Hither by Thy grace I'm come.”

So that Robert Robinson was looking both ways when he wrote the verse, like my suggested monument on Point Look-out. We need not, then, be surprised that a young man, like Newman, should write—

“*So long* Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on.”

The reference to a great hymn, justly popular amongst saints, and classic amongst hymns, in spite of some slight blemishes, reminds me of a ruder but not less hallowed minstrelsy. I wonder what age John Newton had reached, when he wrote the lines—

“And can He have taught me
To trust in His name,
And *thus far* have brought me
To put me to shame?”

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The "thus far" of Newton may stand alongside of the "so long" of Newman, even though I have not the material for placing it at the exact point in his spiritual chronology nor for proving it an early composition. But that it is applicable to early stages of the Christian life may be proved from experience. I knew a man in Christ (as Paul would say) who at an early point of his inward and outward life was threatened with discouragement of an acute character, at the very time when it was necessary that he should not be in such a temper of mind. He confided his trouble to one who was a sister both in the flesh and in the spirit, and received as the healing leaf for his momentary sickness the assurance that "He has not brought you *thus far* to put you to shame." And whatever may have been the date of John Newton's conversion relatively to the date of the composition of the hymn, "Begone, unbelief," it is certain that even in the early stages of the Christian life the words "thus far" and "so long" and "hither by Thy grace" are applicable and helpful. And, in other words, the experimental material for the construction of a theology of Divine Guidance, lies in the hand of even very young Christians. We have been led "thus far,"

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we have been blessed "so long," we have been brought "hither"; then God provides, Christ prospers, the Spirit directs, and "there remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God."

II

OF THE DIVERSITY OF THE DIVINE GUIDANCE

IN the present chapter we are to try to meet a difficulty which was suggested by the treatment of the subject in the previous one. We were speaking of the way in which souls long for light and pray for leading, and, amongst other things, we said that their petition often expressed itself in the language of a hymn by John Henry Newman, and the sigh after an assurance of heavenly care and control was vocalised in the words, "Lead, kindly Light." Now, if these words had come down to us in some mediæval form, and had been translated out of an anonymous writer of the past, the case would have provoked no difficulty. The hymn would have been almost as colourless as the one which Dr. Neale versified out of Stephen the Sabaite, of which hymn no one has yet

succeeded in finding the Greek original. No one cares particularly for that ; it would not make any difficulty to us if we were to find out that Stephen the Sabaite was a myth, and that the Constantinople Octoechus, from which the hymn was said to be taken, never existed. We should still go on singing—

“Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my guide?”

And from the study of the marks we could deduce the doctrine that guidance, like salvation, is by the way of the Holy Cross! We might have to make one change at the close of the hymn, where we are told that

“Angels, Prophets, Martyrs, Virgins,
Answer, Yes,”

because we are convinced by experience and by observation that the celibate state is not, as has so often been supposed, a special or a superior order in the Christian Church ; the proclamation of it, as such, has been a great evil, both to the individuals, who are the subjects of the distinction, and to the community from whom they are separated. But we must not drift into a dissertation on this

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subject of the single or dual life further than to say that such matters belong to the individual call and to the personal guidance, and do not differ from the decisions which we have to make on the city or street in which we live, nor from the choices which we exercise as to whether we will write for the newspapers or sell coals. There is no such thing as an order of virgins ; there are some very happy unmarried people, and some equally happy married people. The outlook of the latter over human life is wider than that of the former, and they ought to be the more useful class of the two on that account.

But to return to our "Lead, kindly Light." While we can treat Stephen the Sabaite as if he were an anonymous person, we cannot so treat Newman. His hymn has a history : it was a point of departure, or at least an indication that he was leaving things that were behind and stretching out after things that were before. The goal of his earthly leading might be, for a while, concealed from his view ; it is not concealed from ours : it was not concealed from the Lord's. May we sing a hymn written on the road to Rome ? And that leads to a deeper question, Does the Spirit of God ever lead men Romewards ? The reason why we raise these questions is

that we are sure they were in the minds of some when reading the first chapter, and they are perfectly proper questions to be asked, nor should they be answered except honestly. Ought we to sing a hymn written on an orange-boat in the straits of Bonifacio, when the prayer of the singer was apparently answered by a passage through another strait and by the piloting of the ship into a strange and other sea, not exactly a Pacific Ocean, if we may judge from subsequent disclosures?

There are not a few Puritans of the old and classic sort (the salt of the Church as well as of the world) who altogether refuse to sing this hymn, on account of its associations. Sensible as they rightly are, that few perils threaten English Christianity like those of the Romeward movement, they will not stir a foot nor even lilt a song that tends towards that dolorous goal. If asked whether Newman was really guided of God, their answer would be an abrupt negative. Their consistency is to be honoured, their fidelity is to be followed; but their judgment of the Christian life is too limited; and in answering one question so positively they raise other questions not so easy of reply. Would it be easy to pray "Lead, kindly Light" (and we must pray it, whether we are Newmanists

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or not), when we have to remind ourselves, before praying, that the most conspicuous instance of the failure of the prayer, in modern times, is the man who put the prayer most clearly in all men's lips? The difficulty would soon spread from the observed case to similar and related cases, and we should find so much to perplex us that we might be in danger of not saying "Lead, kindly Light" at all. The extreme Puritan statement is not, therefore, an adequate solution of the difficulty and does not resolve the perplexity; the right direction to look for a solution is to exercise ourselves in the widest outlook over human life, and especially over the spiritual life of man; for I take it for granted that God's fairest work on earth is a redeemed soul, of which we may say what George Herbert says of the making of man generally—

"To whose creation
All things are in decay";

that is, he saw an element in human life which made it a permanent feature in the midst of a world crowded to the brim with passing features; and what he says of man in the world, we say of the Redeemed Man amongst men. I think it was Novalis who

spoke about touching heaven when he laid his hand upon a human body ; perhaps, when he said it, he was in revolt against the study of souls, and fled to bodies for relief. At all events he was not wholly wrong. But a person who sought refuge from the psychology of the Natural Man by fleeing to the study of the Spiritual Man, would be wholly and entirely in the right. His reward would be great in heaven, because he would be observing at every turn what the angels desire to look into, what Peter Sterry in the Commonwealth Time described as the "Rise, Race, and Royalty of the Kingdom of God" in the soul of man. Creation shows a master-hand, Redemption the hand of an Arch-Master. And while the adaptations of natural life are comprehended under the term "Sophia," or the Wisdom of God, the adjustments of the spiritual life and its laws and development are what is called by the Apostles the All-varied Wisdom of God. I am sorry that I cannot translate the Greek word better—I know what it means, and what it does not mean. It does not mean that the manifestation of God which we call His wisdom is variegated like a Joseph's coat of many colours, patched up out of many fabrics, both old and new, and often self-discordant because

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the new agreeth not with the old. It does mean that there is an ever-changing diversity in the Divine wisdom and work which glows and gleams like a fine opal in the light or like an ancient glass vessel from Cyprus or Phenicia, where all the finer harmonies of the solar spectrum are unceasingly at play. And it is true of the Church as well as of the world that the Never-changing One is to be sought in the Ever-changing Many. That His wisdom should baffle our knowledge is what we have a right, *à priori*, to expect, and especially when we are contemplating it on the side where it seems to be many and not one. In the leading of souls, as well as in the general question of faith or unfaith, God must be His own interpreter, and we must be content to have it so.

But this reflection is only a preliminary discipline, needful for the clearing of our minds from an over-righteous provincialism; the "Kindly Light" is only another name for the "Universal Light," and it would cease to be kindly exactly in proportion as it was discovered to be less than universal.

We must not, then, by a hasty judgment, conclude that the Spirit of God would never lead a man into the communion of the Roman Catholic Church, for such a judgment

would mean that the Holy Spirit had actually forsaken the Church in question, and that the rule now applied *nulla salus intra Ecclesiam*, which would be a caricature of history, and a refusal to recognise some of the wonderful works of God which are still being done in the name of Jesus. So we may well be on our guard against a hasty solution, reached by the application of judgment *à priori*, which need not be a right judgment at all. Let us try ourselves on a somewhat wider problem, and instead of discussing merely the conscience of a Roman Catholic, or the conscience by which one becomes such, let us imagine the further cases of a Moslem or a Jew, or any others who may be suitable for the elucidation of the argument.

We shall observe in the first place, that they are, all of them, by the terms of their religion, believers in Divine guidance. Take, for instance, the Moslem. We have already alluded to the Fathah, or opening prayer of the Koran. Suppose we transcribe it.

“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the world, the Merciful, the Clement, the King of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious ; not of those against

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whom Thou art incensed, nor of those who go astray."

The Moslem usage is conclusive as to their belief that this is a real prayer—the Prayer of Prayers, we might almost say. And although it is, no doubt, meant to be said in a Moslem sense, many of their leading doctors have allowed that the expression "those to whom Thou hast been gracious," includes the Jews and the early Christians, and it is therefore a comprehensive prayer, and I can imagine that it could be used, with very slight reserve, in St. Paul's Cathedral. It does not differ by a whole breadth of the firmament from "Lead, kindly Light."

Assuming, then, that the prayer was genuinely uttered from the heart of a Moslem, it is a conceivable experience that the answer to the prayer might come in a change of religion, the Moslem might become Roman Catholic. Indeed, quite apart from praying, it is conceivable that he might undergo a change of religious profession. In which case what would be the character of his guidance? Progressive or the opposite?

Turn, in the next place, to the Jew. It needs very little statement to maintain that there is almost a birthright of guidance

in the Jewish Church; they were elected to be guided and to guide. The pillar of cloud over them by day and the pillar of fire by night were no transient beacons reserved for themselves and limited to their own wilderness. They are our emblems even more than theirs. When we talk of these things, we talk in their language.

“Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Guide me all my journey through.”

And when we pass over from the somewhat speculative Pentateuch history to the clear and ringing notes of the prophets, we shall find such a reinforcement of the doctrine of Divine guidance in great and precious promises that we should be easily disposed to reckon the Jewish people as rich in teaching and in prayer, and in Divine assurance beyond the quintessence of a thousand Fathahs. You must remember, in calculating this wealth, that one way to estimate it is to realise the loss of it, which is exhibited historically in the story of the later Judaism, the people that did not understand and does not consider. If you want to find this sense of loss in its most pathetic form, you could hardly do better than study

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the song of Rebecca in "Ivanhoe"; it begins with

"When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonished lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow,
By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.'

Then comes the tale of the loss of privileges and of sanctuary rights, and at last we are led up to what must surely be a Christian conclusion (for Rebecca is almost a Christian)—

"But Thou hast said, The blood of goats,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize;
A contrite heart, an humble thought
Are Mine accepted sacrifice."

Now, let us imagine this sense of historical Divine guidance to be reinforced into a fresh intensity of faith, and the faith to find fresh expression in prayer for direction, it might easily occur (for it does sometimes occur, and many of the cases of its occurrence are conspicuous cases) that the answer to the prayer for light might come in a change of religion ;

amongst other possibilities, the Jew might become a Roman Catholic. Would that be a progressive step, and under the influence of heavenly guidance?

In the same way, still working in the region of hypothesis, we might discuss the possibilities of a change of religion on the part of a Roman Catholic. He, too, believes in guidance, although the major part of that experience is looked for from those who are his ecclesiastical superiors. Still there is nothing to prohibit, and an immense amount to encourage the prayer "Lead, kindly Light," on the part of a sincere Roman Catholic: the prayer would not be taken out of Newman's lips by the Church into whose communion his prayer appears to have led him.

Now, up to this point, we have been indulging in hypotheses. We say that all the great religions believe in Divine guidance; so believing, they might conceivably be found transferring members, under the influence of that belief and its associated prayers, from one community to another. The question that is before us is this—Is it possible to say whether the prayer is answered when a Moslem or a Jew becomes a Catholic? And I think the answer is this—In some cases we can tell very clearly.

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in others it is difficult to decide. Since Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God to man, then any change which brings us nearer to Him, and to God through Him, must be of the nature of Divine guidance. And for the same reason, any change which carries Christ below the horizon of our spiritual vision cannot be regarded by us as a case of heavenly light and leading. So that if a Jew or a Moslem were to versify, respectively, his pillar of cloud or his opening prayer, and were to make a prayer-hymn of the order of "Lead, kindly Light," and then were to become a Catholic, it would be a case of Divine guidance, at all events in the essentials of right thought and of right faith. There are, however, cases where the value of a change in religion is far more difficult to estimate. It might mean a higher spiritual life to make a change, it might mean the very opposite. Two religions might stand too near together for us to make a broad statement. We cannot, therefore, make an ascending scale of religions, in which we can always and certainly, and in every applied case, say, "This religion is higher than that"; what we can say is that prayers for light and leading are sure to be answered, sooner or later, for those who offer them sincerely.

There will be cases, however, in which it is as little our business to say in what the answer consists, as it is our concern to actually answer the prayers themselves. In such cases we must be content to say with the Moslem, "Lead us in the pathway of those to whom Thou hast been gracious."

It will perhaps seem as if, in these reflections, we had grouped together, by actual reference and by implication, cases of too widely varied probability, and that it is especially unfair to read the story of Newman's abandonment of Protestantism in the light of such illustrations as are afforded by the conversion of a Moslem or a Jew to Christianity or a Catholic to Judaism; for while the first is a natural and normal proceeding occurring every day of the week, the other cases occur with such extraordinary rarity that they do not contain sufficient material for the purposes of analogy or of generalisation. No doubt there is something to be said for this way of looking at the matter. The conversion of a Moslem to Christianity is a rare event, to Roman Catholicism a double rarity. The reason for this no doubt lies in the fact that the Moslem regards the Christianity which he meets as tainted either implicitly or explicitly with

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idolatry, and he is so far in the right that we may almost take it as a missionary axiom that no conversions are to be expected from Islam to Churches that have the appearance of being idolatrous, and often the substance as well as the appearance. It is idle to send Roman or High Anglican missions to Islam. Moreover, political pressure and hereditary fanaticism are so characteristic of Moslem countries that no form of missionary effort can effect a very great degree of immediate success. And we may certainly allow that Moslem conversions are not a wide basis for a discussion of the causes which lead to such conversions. But it occurs to us that if we had been living at the time of the first Romeward movement in modern England, we should have had a very similar phenomenon to discuss. We should have found it almost impossible to get enough cases to argue about, for the adhesions of Protestants to Rome were at that time almost as rare as the conversions of Moslems to-day. So the analogy does not really break down. Moreover, the illustrations which we have given above do not depend upon numbers at all. It is simply a study of the praying soul as a unit that we were engaged upon. If it is insisted that we are to drop the unit and

take the society, we might give answers more readily, but they would not be answers to the questions that we were asking. We were not inquiring which is the true Church, but what becomes of the true man, and in particular whether the true man will find his way into the true Church, supposing any such to exist, and in particular whether X was a true man, and consequently under the covenanted guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is our promised leader in all cases where our natural light is insufficient for the finding of the way. When we put the inquiry in this way, with X written instead of Newman, it becomes easier for us to see what we are inquiring into. Here is a ship in full sail making for a particular port under the influence of a particular wind ; is the wind responsible for the port? The answer is in the negative, for another ship in full sail is making for a port in the exactly opposite direction under the very same wind. And here is a soul, sailing on a reactionary tack towards errors which were supposed to have been long exploded, and close by, another soul (they might even be brothers), sailing on a progressive tack towards half-discovered truths and all the rocks which lie outside Port Discovery. Is God responsible for both

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motions? The answer is yes, if we are only considering wind and sails; but we cannot limit ourselves in that way. What about the rudder? The responsibility of the hand on the rudder is of quite another order from the responsibility of the winds that fill the sails: the one is a problem of natural mechanics, the other of spiritual mechanics. Who holds the helm? That is the real question. The answer is that in almost every case the helm is humanly held with occasional superadded pressure from an invisible hand, and it is only in the case of real saints that the human pressure becomes microscopic or actually falls to zero, while the Divine pressure becomes permanent and the settled and uniform experience. Between the two extremes of the Life in Self and the Life in God, the phenomena of the religious life have to be placed. They are very complex, and the distinction between the operating wills cannot easily be made. It can be made in the selfish man, and in the perfected saint; in the interval between these two the conduct is a complex, where we have often to say, "God only knows whether this was of God or not." We can apply general principles, and say with Christian confidence that every wind which blows us,

and every orientation of the compass which turns us into greater love of Christ, and into the co-ordinated greater love of man in Christ and for Christ, all that makes us think highly of Him and lowly of ourselves, that makes us worship where we used to be indifferent, and self-sacrificing where we used to be self-content, is of God, and is the result of the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit ; and this is true, whether the ship reaches a Roman port or any other.

Only we must not forget also that, amongst other marks of progress, the love of truth and the discovery of causes and effects is one of the things by which the Spirit of God has been defined in our consciousness. "He shall lead you into all truth." If that be kept in mind, it will follow that a belief in the Ecclesiastical Miracles, many of which are palpable errors, must not be considered a work of the Holy Ghost.

It will be said, "Now you are returning from X to Newman, who made the first strain upon his faith and logic in this very region." I think, however, that it can be shown that Newman did, to some extent, correct his earlier judgment on those very points, where the verdict was that the marvels which he first defended were untenable. And even if his

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motions in this regard were slow, and his decisions not always as frank as one could wish, the fact that he moved away from any superstition must be due to the influence of the Spirit that leads into all truth. And if one man may correct himself thus, who shall say that the Roman Church itself may not some day purge itself of its formal errors, and furnish the most conspicuous example that now seems possible of the convincing power of truth, when commended to the conscience of men by the blessed Spirit of God? Many books would be taken off the Index Expurgatorius and elevated almost to the Canon; many saints would lose their aureoles and their places in the calendar; pretensions would be sacrificed, or at all events reduced to harmony with history and science, and we should know to what cause to refer these happy and beneficent results.

To resume the inquiry with which we started: We are persuaded that the work of God in the training and guidance of souls is complex, such as we should expect from His all-varied wisdom. We cannot always be sure that a man is being guided in the great decisions of life, though we are sure that he ought to be so guided. We recog-

nise in the guided soul, especially in its earlier stages, a mixture of controls which it takes long to purify. We must not assign to one control what belongs to another. In view of our ignorance as to the scope and outlook of the Divine Wisdom in the nutrition and training of souls, we are not prepared to say, in all cases, whether this or that man was led of the Spirit, or how far, and in the particular instance, we have neither the means nor the will to express a final judgment. If we were asked what we suspect to be the truth of the case, we should say that we are inclined to believe that other influences lower than the Divine overshadowing have been involved in the decision, and in any case we suspect that by this time John Henry Newman has left the Roman Catholic Church, and has become attached to the Church of All Saints.

III

THAT GUIDANCE IS A PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCE FROM RESTRAINT TO CONSTRAINT

WE have, all of us, noticed that in the ethical development both of the race and of the individual we begin with negatives and go on to positives. We trace this, readily enough, in the progress from Law to Love, *i.e.*, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In particular injunctions, also, one can mark the passage from the negative to the positive. The best instance is what is called the Golden Rule, which had a long history in the form—

“Do to no man what thou wouldest not that men should do to thee”

before it passed over into the Canonical and Christian statement—

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

What is true of the single formula is also true over the whole region of commandments contained in ordinances; they must fall, at first, into the terms, "Do not touch, do not handle, do not taste." Accordingly, as Jevons points out in his Introduction to the "History of Religion,"¹ "It is the categorical imperative, 'Thou shalt not——' which is the first form assumed by the sense of social and moral obligation and by religious commandments." The processes of evolution and the workings of Divine Providence, Grace, and Guidance, transfer this categorical imperative into its other form, 'Thou shalt——,' and what is true in the elementary regions of conduct and law is also true in the higher region of Divine Guidance. Here also we begin with "taboo." The language in which Jevons describes the "taboo" of the savage is equally applicable to the limitations and crosses of the person who is on his way to become a saint. "Taboo is the conviction that there are certain things which must—absolutely, and not on grounds of experience or 'unconscious utility'—be avoided." I suppose him to mean that there are certain things which you must not do, though you have never

¹ Page 12.

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proved the doing of them to be hurtful ; you must avoid them, although you have no conscious conviction that the not doing of them will be of advantage. Taboo says " Forbear," and does not give the reason for the forbearance. It is not a very intelligent business, but it is a stage through which we have all of us passed in the persons of our ancestors, and through which we are passing in our own persons as we press towards the mark of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The spiritual life has taboos of its own. They are the result of a certain spiritual influence which we are under, which is training us for an experience in which we shall " love and do what we please." We must admit that this is not the way in which *we* should have arranged a world for the perfecting of saints. It is a little too much like inventing the brake of a machine first and the motor afterwards. But this is what seems to go on in the discovery of the laws of life, and it is of no use for us to find fault with the order of production of the machinery.

I can quite understand that some who read this will be irritated by the reference to such senseless modes of life as are involved in the taboo of the savage, who counts things unclean without knowing why, and avoids

plants, animals, people, and even words or glances, as if the universe were as irrational or as malevolent as himself. Well, we will leave the irrational savage on one side, though he is in reality just as truly a learner in God's school as we are, and ought not to be despised because he is in the bottom class; and we will take a conspicuous instance of a non-Christian progressive soul, who developed some kind of knowledge with regard to the power "not himself that made for righteousness"; we will interrogate Socrates with regard to the special form of Divine leading which he claimed to possess. Every one has heard of that superhuman influence in the experience of Socrates, which he calls sometimes by the name of a "divine somewhat," and which has occasionally the shorter name of "the sign." He told his judges in his defence that "the sign" was one which he had experienced ever since he was a child. It was a voice which came to him and always forbade him to do something which he was on the point of doing, but never laid upon him anything which it enjoined him to do. It was, in fact, a sort of unexpected taboo upon certain actions or lines of life to which Socrates was otherwise disposed. And, in particular, it was a taboo upon politics and political life; and

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the effect of the taboo upon Socrates' own mind was to finally convince him that he who would really fight for the right in the State, and not lose his life in the process, must work from the basis of a private man and not become a public servant, in the political sense of the term.

And there can be no doubt that this attention which Socrates paid to his sign (we may use the language of mathematics and call it his "negative sign") was one of the things which irritated his judges against him, and finally secured the adverse verdict of his death. It was, in fact, the main ground of the accusation in his indictment that he was introducing new divinities into the already sufficiently well-stocked Pantheon of the State. Hence in the dialogue which Plato represents Socrates as holding, not long before his trial, with Euthyphro, we find the latter saying that the accuser of Socrates "means to attack you about the familiar sign which occasionally, as you say, comes to you." The effect was, no doubt, something like the claim to be heard on grounds of conscience in a court of law: there may be a forum of the conscience, but the ordinary forum knows nothing of it and resents any reference to it.

The point, then, that we have to notice in the trial of Socrates is his *reverence for the laws, including the Law of the Voice*; and he has himself explained to us that the sign, when it came, was of the nature of a negative sign. Sometimes it stopped him from a line of conduct, sometimes it pulled him up sharp in the middle of a speech. But after the sentence had been pronounced on him, the familiar sign ceased to restrain, the brake was taken off the machine; if it was not exactly turned into a motor, it certainly ceased to be a brake. And so he addressed his judges in the following manner: "I should like to tell my judges of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the familiar oracle within me has been in the habit of opposing me about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or an error about anything; and now, as you see, there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either as I was leaving my house and going out in the morning, or when I was going up into this court, or while I was speaking anything I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching this matter has the oracle opposed me."

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And so, at the end of the last act of his life, Socrates registered an observation that he had passed, or was passing, out of the region of restraints into the region of approbations and compulsions. There is something like an animated taboo in the first part of the experience; he is constantly hearing the word "Don't," and feeling the clutch at his sleeve; most of us would have thought that the sign protested overmuch, especially if it took us out of the stimulating atmosphere of political life. The really interesting thing to observe is not the persistence and long continuance of the negative sign, but the fact that the animated taboo was replaced by what we may call an animated quiescence, something which said, "Go on now, and at whatever speed you like, the track is clear and the real Judge, to whom lies the appeal from all shadow judges, is holding up the prize to your aspiring eye."

In explaining, somewhat at length, the position and experience of Socrates with regard to his negative sign, it need scarcely be said that there is Christian precedent for treating his case closely and sympathetically. The earliest fathers of the Church were quite satisfied of the essential Christianity of Socrates and the Socratic school. Justin

Martyr, in particular, instances Socrates, and, I think, Heraclitus, as conspicuous examples of that life according to the Logos, which makes men Christians before Christ's advent as well as since. And while it may be the case that Justin knew little of Heraclitus upon which to base so high an argument, of Socrates he knew a great deal, and his approving judgment is no isolated patristic phenomenon. I remember once saying of Justin that he was not content merely to throw Socrates a rope from the ship on which he was sailing, he must needs haul him on board and bid him to make himself at home with the ship's crew. And certainly any man who has a sign which keeps him from wrong actions and in the end impels him to right actions, or, at least, quiesces approvingly in the right conduct to which the man himself comes, has a claim on our Christian fellowship far beyond those who caricatured the faith by monastic excesses or wasted the energy of the Christian life in the minutiae of ritual or of verbal criticism. Let us die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his. That carries with it, "Let me live the life of the righteous, and let our guide be like his." Having now looked out over the question of guidance on its ethical

side, we must have observed that it appeared at first in form of a taboo or restraint, and that, for some time, this negative element was its leading mark. If this has been the case in the history of the race, we must not be surprised if something of the same kind appears in the history of the individual. It would, perhaps, be too hasty a generalisation to say that Divine leading, when it first appears in life, must always take this negative form. There are, however, collateral reasons for believing that this is not very far from the truth. We may, perhaps, see it better by examining the experiences of notable right men, either individuals or societies. Was it not Theodore Parker, who began his religious life by a checked impulse which kept him from throwing a stone at some helpless bird or beast, so that he carried home for an explanation the categorical imperative which had said "Don't" so clearly to him that even a boy had to pay attention to it? Such a case is interesting, because there is no hereditary taboo against stoning a bird or a cat. Heredity is in the other direction, as even grown men know. It was to heredity that the "Don't" was directed, and whoever said it was not speaking the unintelligent language of taboo. It was saying in a loud voice,

"Pity that creature," and in a low, reverberating voice, which the boy could only hear later on, it was saying, "Ransom that slave!" The first day of the hearing of the voice was a prophet's call, a reformer's ordination day. Yet it only said "Don't." When we think of men moving in societies, we have one case of guided life in which the individual leading and the common life have often been found in singular clearness and purity. We need no other proof of the interest which the Society of Friends has taken in this question of spiritual leading than the effect which the study has had on their vocabulary. One of the first Quaker lessons is that of paying attention to what they call "a stop in the mind," *i.e.*, a sense of the restraint of the Spirit. "Why did you not do that?" we ask one of them to tell us. "I felt a stop in my mind against it," is the reply. It is the daemon of Socrates over again. Like Socrates, the Friend can say, "It has been in the habit of opposing me about trifles," and it might be added, "and they ceased to be trifles when I found who it was that opposed me." When the Friends deliberate in common over some united course of action, it is open to any one to express himself against that action by the Scriptural language

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that "the cloud still rests on the tabernacle." The inference being that, until the cloud addresses itself to motion, it is not wise for us to go forward. Now, no doubt, such methods of deciding lend themselves often to the hindering of God's work as well as to its helping ; for, in times of spiritual declension a few persons may easily reduce the whole community to inaction, without any Divine warrant at all ; the "stop" in this case being the mere expression of traditional or hereditary preference. All that we were saying was that the vocabulary of the Society with its stops-in-the-mind and its cloud-that-does-not-move-on-the-tabernacle, is a sufficient evidence that the study of guidance amongst them has an element which is not altogether dissimilar from the "Divine Voice" that led Socrates to his doom. Perhaps we may sum up the matter for our own practical life in the following manner : If we are really seeking for Divine guidance and carefully registering the observations that our experience presents *we must not be surprised to find the Cross set up at the entrance of the path nor to hear some one saying to us, "Forbear,"* when we would turn to the right hand or to the left.

In giving heed to that which urges forbearance, we are not always able to give a

rational account of the influence that we come under ; even in the spiritual region taboo may sometimes border on the ridiculous, and often be difficult of explanation and defence. On the other hand, it is written, "My sheep hear My voice," and it will often be a part of the variegated wisdom of God to mask its own excellence and defer its own justification. This applies to constraints as well as to restraints. You have typical cases in the Acts of the Apostles, where Philip is sent down into the wilderness to preach, apparently to the figure of nobody, and he goes ; or where Peter is told to eat meat which, in the judgment of all his past religious life, was common and unclean ; or when Ananias, of Damascus, is told to go and put his head into the lion's mouth, and when he protests obtains no more assurance, except that the lion is an elect lion, and a reiterated injunction to go and do what 'I have told thee to do.' The best proof that we could have that the restraining or constraining power, that we find asserting itself in our lives, was *not* of God, would lie in the fact that its dictates always and at once secured our rational approbation. "Who is blind," says the Lord in the prophet, "like My servant ?" But He who said it was more than a pair of

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human eyes to His blind disciple. It will never be a rational process, in the first instance, to leave houses or lands or kith and kin for the sake of the Kingdom ; the perfect wisdom that underlies the great abandonment is reserved for the time of the perfect coming of the Kingdom ; we do not forget that the Divine Wisdom will commence its justification in "this present life," but there is "the world to come, and the life everlasting." That is the quarter in which the ways of God to men will be justified fully and finally ; that is the region where they can assert Eternal Providence and not fear the contradiction of the upstart intellectuality.

So we return to the "stops in our mind," and determine to give heed to them, even though they may cover ground that does not always appear to have the clearest sanction of the reason. In many cases, however, the Reason itself takes sides with the power that is using the brake upon the will and in the affections. For example, it is from philosophy as well as from prophecy that we are led to the doctrine that has been expressed in the words, "How many things there are of which we have no need!" And many of the "stops" which we feel in the earlier life, can be grouped under this principle, and so

become perfectly reasonable. But even if they could not be so grouped, if only we were sure of the quarter from which the pressure came, and of the voice that kept saying to us, "Forbear," we should go on our way, whether Reason knew the road or not.

As we have pointed out above, we are to expect that restraining grace will develop into constraining grace, the "negative sign" into the "positive sign." Most of the saints know something about this ; and the Friends have a regular vocabulary for it : over against the "stop in the mind," there must be a term to express "a stir in the mind" ; this stir in the mind the Friends call a "concern" ; they say, "I have a concern to go to this place, to talk to this people." Often in their meetings an announcement is made to the effect that "our friend Agatha Willing opened to us a concern which had for some time rested on her mind to visit in the love of the gospel certain places and people ; and we have united with her in the concern." This is a part of the language of Canaan, but all the saints speak a related dialect ; if not the classical Hebrew, certainly the Aramaic variation. Some say, "I had a burden from the Lord," or "I felt it laid upon me." It was not necessarily the Reason that laid the

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burdens ; more commonly it was Love that laid them, and love that accepted them. When Mrs. Browning, in "Aurora Leigh," makes one poor sempstress leave her hard employ to care for her sick companion, she makes her say—

"Lucy wants a drink :
Let others miss me, never miss me, God."

That was a Love-guidance, not a leading of the Reason. And ten thousand living "concerns" are involved in the right evaluation of the question, "When saw we Thee thirsty?" and its companion question, "How did you know I was thirsty?" and ten thousand answers of peace in the working out of the reply, "Ye did it to the least, and ye did it unto Me."

But these are love-burdens and love-concerns ; they are, of all such, the safest to take up, and the most necessary to carry ; and they are more frequently, by far, to be classified under the head of constraints than of restraints. We do not say ordinarily, "The love of Christ *restraineth* us," and one spark from that consuming fire will kindle much dry wood of ordinary or conventional living.

It is significant, in our study of the saints, to find how well tempered, how thoroughly

trained they are in both of the directions indicated. For example, in St. Paul we have constant evidence of hindrance and restraint, and not always from the resisting power of evil. He knows when Satan hindered him, but he also knows that "the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not." Quite a study might be made of the apostolic restraints. But what of the constraints? Over and over again we have evidence that the man has been caught in the mighty rushing wind of Pentecost, and his language is that "he labours, according to His working who is in me as a mighty energy"; for Paul was a man of weighty concerns, and knew what quarter they came from and unto what they tended. And of this side of his life also a study should be carefully made. But the very least of those who have learnt to distinguish the voice of the Shepherd from the voice of the stranger has also a share in this motion and rush of the heavenly wind.

IV

*THAT DIVINE GUIDANCE IS OFTEN
MEDIATE, BUT IS NOT, ON
THAT ACCOUNT, ANY THE LESS
DIVINE*

THE world in which we live is becoming more intelligible and more intelligent from day to day ; the process of knowing and being known is every day becoming more attractive and more wonderful. The ancient voids of the interplanetary spaces have long since been filled up, and the spaces between souls are also being bridged over. Thoughts are being transferred from this soul to that, but they do not pass, except on the assumption of an intervening spiritual substance, which is capable of transmitting its message in either direction ; and this spiritual substance, or whatever may be its equivalent, is increasingly in evidence. All of us who love Christ are beginning to realise that we

live in the same street and all on the same telephone, some of us that we are lodged next door to one another and can knock on the partitions, a few that we are all under the same roof and all within arm's length and heart-reach. But if that be so, it is not enough to say that the world is becoming more intelligible and more intelligent ; it must also be more lovable and more loving. So we are becoming prepared for larger formulæ of life ; we can say, " In Him we live and move," and " In Him we think and reason," and " In Him we love and sacrifice." But with this increase in the outlook, and with this extension of the power of touch and grip, we are exposed to the frequently recurring difficulty, that in knowing the world, and to some extent even in loving it, if we succeed in getting so far, we may be in danger of losing our Lord in the very process of finding Him, and of missing Him where we are most closely investigating His works and His ways. And this is certainly true in the problem of Guidance, as well as in physical researches ; for there are media of guidance just as there are media for the transmission of information to the senses ; and we may easily, in either case, obliterate the higher information by a too narrow observation of

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the channels and processes by which the information reaches us. By knowing more, we ought not to believe less.

In the old time it was apparently easier than it is now. One had only to believe that God would guide a faithful soul, and it was at once concluded that God stood at our right hand, or just behind us, in an almost human form, and said what seemed to be actual words, which sounded like "Not this way, but that way," and so determined the conduct of the willing and attentive hearer. But if it had come to be observed that the direction of conduct did not come with this exactness and immediateness out of the Infinite, as, for example, in the case where some lesser guardian and lover said, "This is the way, and that is not the way," it might easily happen that a theory and practice of human guidance might displace the older formula, and the greater Lover, who might have sent the lesser, might be lost sight of.

In the same way, if we are interpreting the life of Christ, considered as a world for spiritual study, and with all the wonders of unknown and half-known worlds within itself, we shall often find that in proportion as we understand Him there comes a certain check

to our believing in Him. For example, He claims historically to read human thoughts, and to have the drama of each individual soul before Him as an outspread panorama, in which He isolates, as with a pointer, certain features of spiritual meaning. Half a century ago we should have heard it said, by hesitating or sceptical people, that a Christ who professed and practised thought-reading was not to be believed, because thought-reading was miraculous ; or if He was to be believed, on the other hand, as confident and trustful souls affirmed, the duty of belief turned on the fact that we were capable of believing in miracles. But nowadays most of us are believers, to a certain extent, in thought transference, and some of us experience it intelligently every day we live ; and the first result of this change of view, caused by the filling up of the chasms and abysses between individual souls, is that both the believers and the unbelievers have to abandon their arguments—the former, because a new region has been reclaimed from the miraculous, and annexed to what we may call the ordinary, and to that extent faith has been changed into sight ; the latter because their objection to what Christ is said to have done having been removed, they are in danger of dis-

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believing in Christ without a reason, which was not a corner into which they meant to put themselves. Thus He was, in some quarters, disbelieved for professing to read people's thoughts, which no one was supposed capable of doing, or else He was to be disbelieved for telling people what some people are, at least to some extent, capable of knowing. We are invited to disbelieve Him, first, because He did something wonderful; and second, because it turned out not so very wonderful. There is, to be sure, a difference between the occasional transferences of the thought which we make and register and the corresponding powers in Christ, who professes to read all one's past and to know all one's future. Still, the mere opening of the door into the new region often causes a spiritual shock, and appears to be of the nature of a notice to quit, which Reason has served upon Faith in this matter.

Now these difficulties, though they appear to be somewhat Protean, are real enough to be very troublesome. The method of resolving them does not consist in the hasty deletion of an ancient formula, nor in the hasty reconstruction of a new formula, but in the patient continuance of good observations, both in our own spirits and experiences,

and in the spirits and experiences of others. And we shall need, in this particular subject of Divine Guidance, to remember a rule (which I first learnt from my dear friend Frances Power Cobbe) that *we must not cease to believe that God did anything because we have found out the way in which He did it*. This preliminary caution is especially necessary in treating the subject of Guidance ; for although we may have firm faith in God as guiding men, and may, to some extent, be practised in the adoration of the blessed Guiding Spirit, and may believe that in many cases which we read of and observe, the communication appears to be direct and immediate, there will also be cases in which the Guiding Hand works through a chain of many links ; and we must not lose sight of the hand by being too exclusively occupied in the study of the links, and so losing Him in the admiration of the golden chain by which the world is bound about His feet.

I may illustrate this by reference to a case which was reported in a recent newspaper. I have no reason for either believing it or disbelieving it, beyond the fact that there are a thousand similar instances lying all round, and this one has been selected by me because it lies close at hand, and will serve for an

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example of a whole region of spiritual phenomena.

The incident, which is reported in the *Morning Leader* of November 29, 1904, is headed and reported as follows:—

“ *Wonderful Story of Prayer and Telepathy.*

“ Preaching on Sunday, at Hanley Tabernacle, the Rev. I. H. James, M.A., of Yeovil, told an extraordinary story of telepathy.

“ During the South African war a father prayed daily for his son, who was at the front. One night, moved by a strange impulse, the father felt bound to go on praying, and he continued in prayer until the morning.

“ Some time afterwards a letter from the front revealed a remarkable fact. On the very night that the father was constrained to remain praying, his son was taken out of the hospital, where, unknown to his father,¹ he had been down with enteric, and placed in the mortuary among the dead. The hospital doctor, however, was possessed by peculiar uneasiness, and could not rest ; so he got up and went to the nurse who had ordered the removal of the body, and asked if she were sure the patient was dead.

¹ This requires some correction, as below.

“Although she said she was sure, the doctor went to the mortuary, and found that there was still breath in the body. The patient was taken back to the hospital, and eventually restored to health.”

From an actual letter of the father, published in the *Western Chronicle*, Yeovil, December 23, 1904, we are able to make some expansions of the story and some corrections. It should have been stated that the news of the young man's illness had been telegraphed home. Here are his father's own words:—

“At the commencement of his illness his young wife received a telegram from the War Office to say that her husband was dangerously ill. For all those weeks we could hear nothing more concerning him. You can imagine the anxiety and the intensity of our prayers. It must have been about the sixth week after the intelligence of his illness, while I was in bed trying to sleep, he stood before me erect, and waving his hand, said, ‘Goodbye, Dad.’ I was immediately impressed with the consciousness that he was in imminent peril, so rising and going downstairs, I spent the night in prayer. . . . About six o'clock in the morning, I felt that what-

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ever might be the nature of the calamity it was averted."

Waiving any further possible criticism that might arise as to the correctness of the details in this story, and assuming it as, in the main, correct, we have to find out in what directions the explanation of the occurrence is, either wholly or in part, to be sought. Granted that the young man's life, which hung by a thread in more senses than one, was strangely and almost mysteriously recovered, to whose credit should the recovery be assigned? In the old time they would have said that it was the Act of God in answer to prayer; we should probably say, "It was the Method of God, not apart from prayer;" but neither explanation would be satisfactory, because neither is sufficiently intelligent. It is all very well to write Telepathy at the head of a newspaper article, but that does not make Telepathy into Theology, nor tell us how the message was signalled, nor who were the persons signalling, nor why some persons signalled and others not. Let us look at the matter a little more closely. Here are four persons mentioned—a father, a son, a doctor, and a nurse. Are they sensitive, so as to receive and transmit a telepathic message, or whatever it was? The

answer is, that two of them are sensitive, and two of them are not. The least sensitive is the nurse, who appears in the drama of the restored life as a mere lay-figure. That surprises us, because we are in the habit of thinking that women receive and transmit spiritual impressions better than men. The next case is that of the young man. He is almost gone, and unless we invoke the theory that dying men have a preternatural and abnormal psychic activity, we should say that his telegrams will be feebler and more inconsequent than even those of the average dying man, for he has ceased to make any external registration of a living spirit within him. Reserving a doubt^{*} as to the psychic state of the apparent corpse, we may say that these two, the young man and the nurse, are non-sensitive. We now come to the other two. Both of them are sensitive, one of them profoundly so. The father, as a father, might be expected to develop such symptoms as

^{*} This reservation seems necessary, in view of the fact brought out above as to the actual vision of the son by his father, and the reported farewell. It looks as if we ought to admit the psychical activity of the supposed dying man. In that case the young man is hypersensitive, the father and the doctor are sensitive, and the nurse non-sensitive.

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are described, *and when to father we super-add intercessor, we have a receiving and transmitting instrument of the first order.* In the case of the doctor, we have to find the reason of his sensitiveness in another direction ; doctors, as a rule, are men of action rather than men of prayer. It seems pretty clear, however, that the doctor is a receiving instrument and not a transmitting instrument ; and so we are almost shut up to believe that it is the praying father to whom, as an operating cause, the phenomenon of recovery has to be referred.

But how can this be ? He has no news, except the six-weeks'-old information of his son's illness ; he does not know the doctor, nor the hospital, nor the town where his son is lying. If he wishes to communicate, no adjustment of his transmitting instrument will cover the locality of the son, or the town, or the doctor. How did he find out that something was wrong, and succeed in finding out the man that was to put it right ? Was it that the son (A) made psychic contact with his father (B), and that then the father (B) found the doctor (C) ? It seems that we have only taken one step towards the solution. We have concluded that the message passed through B to C ; and we understand that B

stands for a loving heart, which is also a praying heart. But we have failed to explain completely why the loving heart became a disturbed heart, and still more how it became able to transmit across land and sea its own state of concern, unless we fall back upon the Scripture statement as to the direction of our ignorant prayers by an all-knowing Spirit. Clearly we have only gone a little way towards the solution. There must be a *tertium quid* or a *quartum quid* or an *infinitum quid*, if we are to say that we knew how it happened. The phenomena are too complex for a short solution, and so we must say "*God*" and go on investigating.¹ It is something to know that a father's heart and an

¹ The father of the young man puts it differently. He says, "Say God and leave off investigating." According to him, he was "stirred up to take hold of God." As the people of the time say, "He rung up the Central." His exact language is as follows: "God heard our prayers and answered them. That is all. There is nothing strange in that. He is doing this every day and hour. Psychical research may find innumerable instances of the same nature. I ascribe my boy's deliverance immediately to prayer, and to nothing else. With all due respect to the Society of Psychical Research, I think the present case is outside its domain." The only fault of this statement lies in the last sentence.

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intercessory spirit are in touch with the missing factor that we are in search of. And a Christian, who holds to the belief that behind the veil of the visible there is that which corresponds to the terms Father and Intercessor, will feel that he begins to know something about the way in which the phenomena occur. In the case of the doctor, the telepathic communication, however made, resolves itself into a case of guidance; it is exactly as if some one said to him orally, "I wish you would go and see if that young man is really dead," though, perhaps, his own explanation would merely be that he did not feel quite easy in his mind, or quite sure of the nurse's autopsy. But whatever guidance occurred was what we call mediated guidance, for the father in England cannot be left out of the action; and we therefore take it to be a case which comes under the description that guidance is often mediated, but does not cease to be Divine because of its mediation. And I suppose that we must be prepared to find many cases of this kind, for guidance is often found in connection with telepathic phenomena, and when it is so found, it must to that extent be called mediated guidance.

In order to examine this a little more

clearly we will take a simpler instance, of whose correctness we can give a complete assurance. It is a case of a young man who was the subject of a subtle restraint from a course of conduct upon which he was on the point of embarking, and which would have resulted in something very like a spiritual shipwreck. He was, to put it in a figure, sporting in the upper rapids of Niagara. Those who know Niagara will understand the figure. For those who need to have figures explained, it is sufficient to say that the rapids of the Niagara river are of two kinds—one series composed of the foaming waters below the falls, of awful grandeur, but outside the domain of beauty; the other, the upper waters that slip down to the edge of the falls with a continual acceleration, and an indescribable beauty and fascination. Even those who are furthest removed from the thought of suicide will want to dip their feet or their hands into the moving world of the upper waters, of all things in nature the most seductive and alluring. But to return to our subject and his mysterious restraint. If this had been the whole of the story, it would have been summed up in the light of experience in a sense that Divine Mercy had watched over human waywardness, and saved

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him from an error, after the fashion so common in similar cases, by saving him in spite of himself. It would have been a simple case of negative guidance, such as we have already described. But this was not, as I understand it, the whole of the story.

It had pleased God, not long before the event alluded to in the foregoing description (which I am not at liberty to amplify by detail), to bestow upon him that best of gifts that Heaven distributes upon earth—a permanent friendship of the first order. Those of us who know, or who have come to suspect, that we are in this world to find our friends and companions for a better state of being, will understand why the word “permanent” is prefixed to “friendship.” There are, in fact, friendships and friendships. Some flow on smoothly enough, time and space do not attempt to interfere with them much; there are no special rifts in the lute, but neither is there very much music beyond ordinary tunes and conventional harmonies. And, on the other hand, there are friendships that time and space appear to play havoc with; they appear to be broken off by circumstances, they run underground like rivers in a limestone country, but always re-emerge and in

fuller volume and with greater directness, heading straight for the great Eternity that is beyond us. Such a friendship as this last is what is meant by a permanent friendship of the first order.

Now it happened that on the day following the Niagara adventure the young man received a letter from his friend ; it contained an inquiry something like this : " What were you doing yesterday afternoon ? I was in the train returning from ——, and had such a burden come upon me for you that I spent the whole time in prayer on your account." And he could only answer that he was on the point of doing something which he ought not to do, and, without specifying further, that he had been preserved from doing it. Here was a case in which the apparently simple problem of a restraining spiritual force had become complicated by the intrusion of a new factor ; and unless this factor were allowed for, the guidance could not be properly understood, even though it was a simple case, an almost imperceptible application of the " negative sign " of Socrates. But for the man to whom the sign was given it did not cease to be a " Divine somewhat," because there was a human telepathic factor. It did not cease to be Divine Guidance ; in

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fact the Divinity that shapes our ends was more intelligently known than before.

I am far from assuming that any explanation has been given of the intrusion of this new factor. Even if we say "telepathy," we are not much nearer; for supposing we call the young man A, and his friend B. A sent no message to B, hoisted no danger signal, and burned no blue-lights. How, then, did B know what was happening? Perhaps when you have plucked that little flower out of the crannies of experience and explained its story, you will have explained "what God and man are." The ordinary person to whom such a story is related (and I believe I am right in saying that it is only recently that A let the ordinary man know anything about it, for he kept the vision very close for five-and-twenty years) would only say, "It is very strange," but the ordinary Christian would say, "It is very beautiful," and perhaps repeat the verse which says, "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee to keep Thee in all Thy ways; they shall bear Thee up in their hands, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

The problem of personal guidance is one in the study of which we constantly find ourselves walking softly, because of a sense that

we are on the borders of a world other than our own, more intelligent, more sympathetic, and more populous. We loosen our shoe-strings in advance, because we expect to hear presently the intimation that we have crossed into holy ground. Into holy ground, but not into forbidden territory, where trespassers are prosecuted, and where they set traps for them ; both worlds are ours, and it is only because the Church has caricatured the next world by its out-of-date maps that we are afraid of making excursions thereto.

So we need not be surprised if, in studying the phenomena of guidance, the hypothesis of the superior beings, the ministering spirits of the Epistle to the Hebrews, should be one that will explain much to us. Only they must not be the conventional angels, always female in type, and, as some one said of them, made in Germany, but beings of a non-Teutonic order, and perhaps not even of Semitic character, who are known by their deeds to be wiser as well as more loving than ourselves, but who are none the less suspected to be in a real sense our kith and our kin, with the larger, other eyes.

I pass on to the discussion of some further historical cases which bear upon the question, whether guidance is a case of immediate or

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mediate spiritual impulse. The students of this side of the spiritual life are recommended to read a book that occurs in every Quaker library—the Life of Stephen Grellet. In the experience of this good man, there are to be found a variety of cases of spiritual leading ; it is perhaps the best collection of the kind to which one can turn one's attention. Stephen Grellet was a French gentleman, brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, who, as the result of spiritual illumination, abandoned the profession in which he had been brought up, and joined the Society of Friends. His ministry among them, both in Europe and America, was much honoured of God, and it is clear from his own journals and confessions that the powers of the world to come rested upon him in a remarkable degree.

One of the most wonderful visitations that he experienced in his early life was a spiritual intimation of service in the Gospel of Christ which should take him far over land and sea. This intimation came to him when lying at death's door in Philadelphia with yellow fever, which he had contracted in nursing the sick during an epidemic. But we must let him tell this in his own words :—

“The disorder so increased upon me that,

my extremities having become cold, my coffin was ordered, and I was even returned among the daily deaths to the Board of Health, as a "French Quaker." But my dear Master had some further work for me to do, before I could be prepared to enter into His Divine rest.

"During the whole of that sickness I continued entirely sensible, whilst death appeared to be approaching, and I had turned myself on one side, the more easily, as I thought, to breathe my last, my spirit feeling already as encircled by the angelic host in the Heavenly Presence, a secret but powerful language was proclaimed on this wise: 'Thou shalt not die, but live—thy work is not yet done.' Then the corners of the earth, over sea and land, were opened to me, where I should have to labour in the service of the Gospel of Christ. O what amazement I was filled with! What a solemn and awful prospect was set before me! Sorrow took hold on me at the words, for it seemed as if I had had already a foothold in the Heavenly Places."

He then narrates how he recovered, and at once resumed his ministrations to the sick and the dying. Not long after, a remarkable confirmation of the call and the vision were given him, for soon after his recovery, when

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he was attending a meeting of the Friends one week-day morning, a certain Arthur Howell, "in the course of his testimony, mentioned him by name, and said the Lord had raised him up, having a service for him to the isles and nations afar off, to the east and to the west and to the north and to the south;" and Grellet remarks, "I had been careful to keep to myself the view I had of these things, on what seemed to me a death-bed."

Now this is a very wonderful story. We have plenty of marvellous stories of recovery where the tide of life, ceasing to ebb, returns in a full and moving flood. Some of these recoveries have a religious side to them, as when Wiclif decided to "live and beat the Friars." But this case is not parallel, for it is clear that Grellet wanted to die and not live. And if we try to refer the decision to live and the call to service to the "Unconscious Mind," how are we to credit the Unconscious Mind with the vision of lands and seas to be passed through in the service of the Gospel? We shall have to extend the meaning of Telepathy if we are to regard it as transcending time as well as space. It is just conceivable that the testimony of the Friend to Grellet's call in the Quaker meeting may

have a telepathic element, although it is clear that Grellet was not the conscious transmitter. But even that improbability is nothing to the unlikelihood of a prophetic outlook over distant days of service. It seems simplest to say that that which transcends space and time, even if it be only a thought, has a supernatural as well as a natural element. And notice that for the spiritual man *this does not mean that he has dragged his God into the argument, but that the argument is so high that he cannot keep Him out.*

Here is another remarkable occurrence from Grellet's early experiences as a minister of the Gospel. He became impressed with the thought that some extended travel in the United States was required of him, and, as the custom is with Friends under such "concerns," he began to inquire after a companion in the service ; for Friends usually go out "two by two," like the early apostles. He heard that a Friend, named John Hall, was coming from England with the intention of labouring for a while in the United States. It was impressed upon his mind that John Hall and he were to travel together, and he entreated the Lord to clear the matter up for him by convincing evidence. So far all is perfectly natural and quite human. But now

notice what happened. John Hall arrived in America, and he and Grellet soon met. When they met Hall took him on one side and told him, "in a solemn manner, that he was the identical person that he had seen, whilst at sea, prepared of the Lord to be his companion in the service of the Gospel."

The whole incident is very remarkable, for although Grellet speaks of him in his journal as "my dear friend, John Hall," they had apparently never met, Grellet having at that time not visited England. But they had met in a vision on the Atlantic, and one, at all events, recognised what he had seen. Can we strain the analogy of the wireless telegraphy so far as to cover the case of communication between people who have never met, who are, relatively to one another, in unknown latitudes, and whose only link on the reasonable side is the fact that A (on land) has heard that B (at sea) is on his way from England to America, with the prospect of a similar service to his own. That this is guidance must, I think, be admitted ; whether it is mediate or immediate is harder to say. Perhaps we may cover such cases by a simple formula, in two parts : first, that "God has a few of us, whom He whispers in the ear," and second, that "we have more friends, in both worlds, than we wot of."

V

THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD AND THE VOICE OF THE STRANGER

WE now pass on to a matter of practical importance, concerning which questions are often put to us by those who are desirous of walking in the light, and receiving spiritual intimations from the Lord with regard to their conduct or their service. Ought I to do this? to go there? to say that? to take part in that meeting? to give my testimony? to engage in intercessory prayer? And in all such questions it is implied that the inquirer is not sufficiently convinced as to the definiteness and distinctness of the command, and that the addition of a human voice would make the Divine voice more intelligible. Or at all events the inquirer wishes to put his experience by the side of yours, and know

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how you manage to decide when impressions are produced, and what seem like commands are given. Now we must not stop the intercourse of Christian friends in the highest concerns that belong to their lives, even if they that fear the Lord speak *often* one to another; but we need to exercise a special caution in the matter of guiding one another, for the simple reason that our Lord has exercised a special caution in keeping us from doing so. If the parable of the Fair Shepherd has one distinct feature in its interpretation, it is that our Lord has reserved the primary guidance of souls to Himself, however He may be pleased to mediate it, as already noticed. There are only two voices in the story: one is His own, and the other is the voice of the stranger, and there are no bell-wethers. It is expressly stated that the sheep know both of the voices. "Me," He says, "they will follow; the stranger they will not follow." "They know My voice; they do not know the stranger's voice." That is to say, *they do know the stranger's voice so far as to know that it is not their Shepherd's*. And the consideration of this distinction, which is fundamental for holy living, would save us from many temptations and much hindrance. Indeed, those people

who talk of undertaking the guidance of souls are both dangerous and impertinent.

The first answer, then, to be given to those who ask, "How shall I know whether to do or say this or that," is that you do know; or if that is not exactly verifiable, a very slight change in the terms of the understanding between your Lord and yourself will enable you to know. (A visit to an Aurist who knows how to pronounce Effatha may be recommended.) Those who are saints know the voice, and the knowledge is one of the first gifts bestowed upon those who offer themselves as candidates for sanctity. The knowledge of the Voice is an elementary experience. A very small lamb may know it. S. Teresa tells us, in the "Interior Castle," that "He makes them know His voice by so sweet a whistle that they themselves can scarcely hear it. This He does that they may not wander and be lost, but return to their mansion. This whistle of the Shepherd has such power that they immediately abandon all those external things which deceived them, and hasten into the castle."

In another passage of the same book she says: "In many ways He will teach you what you should do to please Him. . . . This delicate touch of His almost always disposes

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the soul to be able to do with a firm resolution that which has been mentioned before."

Now here we have the communication of the Lord's will described as "a delicate touch," and a subtle and "sweet whistle." The latter expression may seem strange, but as it is an expression used by one who knew what she was talking about, it is worth examining. What seems awkward about it is that we instinctively, as Westerns, associate the whistling shepherd with a driving shepherd, and, perhaps, a shepherd's dog. Thus the whistle is of the nature of negative and deterrent guidance, and is meant to keep the sheep on the path in which the shepherd is following them. But if we would be Orientals we should have the shepherd in front, and no dog through whom the whistle of the shepherd is transmitted to the sheep. Thus the soft and subtle whistle is only another way of saying "Follow Me" on the part of One who goes before us in every path which He selects for our obedience, and the guidance becomes positive instead of the negative one, such as those referred to in a previous chapter. If you do not like the expression "sweet whistle," you may change "whistle" into "whisper," and then, combining the "sweet whisper" and the "delicate touch" of which Teresa speaks, you

will understand that the terms used are two ways of expressing the fact of positive Divine Guidance.

Now, as we have already tried to explain, the Heavenly Guidance may be either mediate or immediate, and it is important that we should know something of the media by which a correct spiritual impression is transmitted to us. We have already ruled out, in accordance with the Gospel teaching, any other voice than the one Voice, any "Follow me" except His "Follow Me," and both the Lo, here and Lo, there are assumed to have been dismissed. This does not mean that God will never send a message to you through any one else. Strings that are stretched to unison will take up the same sound, and souls in harmony with God's will become expressive of God's thought. But let us get behind all sounding strings to the striking fingers. We must not make the mistake of the Salvation Army in taking General Booth for a second Moses—a prophet whom, if souls do not obey, they will be cut off from among the people, however much we may honour him for his work's sake. The only way in which the human element can come back to the argument is when a man is employed as a trumpet, or a speaking-tube, or a

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resonator, or a telephone wire, but in all such cases the Lord is at the other end of the apparatus, and should be looked for there. We did not mean to say that the Lord would never send us a message through one of His or our friends; certainly the Voice is not limited to what the Jews used to call "Bath Kol,"¹ which is supposed to come direct from heaven. It may come through a thousand media, this royal message, but remember the caution expressed above from the Gospel parable. The voice of the stranger can also come to us through media, and so it is imperative for us that we know something of the distinction of mediated sounds and calls and claims. And in order to clear our minds with regard to the media of a correct guidance, or the media of the verification of a Divine instruction, we may classify the secondary phenomena to be studied under the following heads:—

- (1) What saith the Scripture?
- (2) What say the Providences?
- (3) Which way does the Cross appear?
- (4) On what road does the Peace rest?

¹ *I.e.*, the Daughter of the Voice. I suppose Wordsworth to refer to this when he calls Duty the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God"

(5) Test the difficult matter by that form of oracle known as "Fleece wet and fleece dry."

1. Our first consideration lies in the observation that there is a certain harmony between the Scriptures and the experience of those who are walking in the truth, which causes them to constantly throw light one upon the other. Over and over again it will happen that, after some line of conduct has been rightly pursued, an experience will be reached something like that of the apostle when he said, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how He said," &c. The soul that walks in the light fulfils Scriptures, and consequently has brought to its remembrance the things that Jesus has said to us. And if this be so, it may be taken for granted that all the verifications do not come at the end of a day's journey: some of them come at the beginning, and some when we are on the way. But in general it will be true that we do not walk long in the path without proving the truth of things spoken by those who have been before us in the path; and we ought therefore to carefully look for illumination in the quarter from which it is proved that illumination commonly comes. In honouring the Scriptures we honour the Spirit that breathes in the Scriptures, and the Lord of

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whom they speak. If any special Scripture is providentially or supernaturally impressed on the mind, that Scripture becomes for the time a part of the Voice, and should be carefully heeded and followed. Much might be said on this point, but there is no need to say much. But perhaps two things may be observed. One is that the use of the Scriptures after the fashion of the "*Sortes Virgilianæ*," in which a passage is taken at random to try one's luck or destiny, is a very uncertain way of finding out the will of God. We do not say that there have not been wonderful instances of successful leadings by random selections, but a very little reflection will convince us that a cautious attitude is a safe attitude. We may easily lose our Guide, and find only our own fancies; but we will not spend time in giving illustrations under this head. A further point is that it is not necessary to have a special theory with regard to the Scriptures and their inspiration. We do not need to take up the position of the early Friends, that whatever is contrary to the Scriptures is necessarily a delusion of the devil. Their caution was wise, but not wisely worded. Any theory which allows that God spake of old time by holy men will be sufficient to enable us to use the Scriptures for reproof,

for exhortation, for comfort, and *for guidance*. But this does not mean that we are to expect as much ethical or spiritual leading from Genesis or Leviticus or Judges, as from the New Testament.

2. Our next point is the scrutiny of the Providences. This means that in the Providences of life we have a kind of alternative Scripture which must be studied like the holy book that it is, and carefully followed. The outward Providence is always a faithful reflex of the inward call. You hear God calling you to a particular path, and you see Him going before and clearing the path by removing the obstructions to your obedience of the call. Or, on the other hand, you may find your path hedged up against a course of action, and a spiritual intimation given to you that if you break the hedge a serpent will bite you !

Nothing is more confirming to one's faith than the experience of coming up to a closed door in the exercise of obedience to what appears to be a call of duty, and then finding the door opened before you by invisible hands ; nor is it much less satisfactory to find that when an erroneous judgment has been made the door is providentially shut in one's face. In many cases an open door will, by

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itself, have all the validity of a direct call. We must buy up opportunities while they are on the market; we must use the time of earthly favour when people are willing to listen, even though we know in our hearts that the prophetic calling does not depend only on opportunity, but that one must speak whether people will hear or whether they will forbear. And, as we have said above, the Providences of God are a holy book to the one that is set on doing the will of God. And some one has noticed that "he who will be careful to mark Providences will never be lacking in Providences to mark."

3. The next point to be regarded in the determination of duty is the part which is played in the problem by the Cross of the Lord.

If we were merely occupied in watching Providences and in registering open doors, we might easily fall into a spiritual line of conduct which, described in the terms of modern science, might be called a "Pathway of Least Resistance." But such a term has no Biblical equivalent. It is true that there are abundant promises of the help which makes things easy; there is One who goes before us to fill up valleys and to reduce

mountains. He makes the depths of the sea a way that the ransomed may pass over : but the pathway through the sea is the way of the greatest resistance, the path of supreme risk, of pre-eminent difficulty. I think our Lord would have us banish from our minds altogether this doctrine of the Least Resistance. It was not His path, and it ought not to be ours. There will certainly not be many mighty works done in Jesus' name while we are studying the line of least effort. Take up the Cross, He says, and come after Me.

And it follows from this that in the determination of one's call or one's conduct the cross takes an especial place. A large part of the decisions we have to make are choices between two or more elective courses of conduct. It is the problem of diverging or crossing roads. At the place where the roads divide there should be an oratory, where one can turn aside and inquire of the Lord. Most of the problems are simple bifurcations. Should I stay in this place or move to London? Should I stay in London or move to the Antipodes? Ought I to change my occupation for a more lucrative one?—a problem which most people resolve with facility ; but not those who have sat under the teaching which

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says, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Ought I to leave the single state of life and share burdens with another? Again a problem easy of resolution to the uncrucified and the unspiritual, who have never pondered the rule about the non-fellowship of Christ and Belial, of the believer and the unbeliever—a rule which has an amazing revenue of promise annexed to it.

All these cases are what we call simple bifurcations, and it will often happen that our clumsy balances cannot detect the difference between the claims of this or of that. At such times we shall often be taught to look for the final decision by a scrutiny of the path in which the greater cross appears, and by taking the path of the greater cross we become introduced into new experiences of communion with Christ crucified. You know, perhaps, that the Stoic philosophers proved the dog to be a reasoning animal, acquainted with the method of Aristotle, by his conduct at the junction of three cross-roads, down one of which his master has gone. Having scented in vain for the footsteps that he knows on the first and second road, he makes no further search on the third road, but runs on rapidly and with the assurance of a good dog that wishes to be on his master's track as soon as

possible. If he had begun, however, with the third road he would not have needed to be an Aristotelian, but could have gone on successfully, as an educated dog that has a master and knows how to find his footprints.

And our problem is not merely to choose between diverging paths, but to choose between paths one of which has been already chosen for us. We may say, if we like, that the scent of Christ's feet is on the path that He chooses; His footprints even appeal to the eye, being, as you know, differentiated by certain signs from all other prints and from all following feet. And it is, as the Salvation Army say, "the Cross that makes the attraction." If we have a scent and sense of that, we can go on at once, our Master is sure to be found on that road; but if we tried a thousand paths on which there was no call to say or feel that we are crucified with Jesus and live in Him, we ought to reject them all. There is nothing in our possession that is such a successful discriminant of the path of duty as the Cross of Jesus, and therefore, beloved soul, when in doubt, take the hard way.

4. A fourth practical rule is to follow the path of the Peace. The Peace of God is associated intimately with the Will of God. That

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is why Dante makes the souls in Paradise say—

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace.”[†]

It would be the worst thing for us if we could keep the Peace of God and at the same time disown or desert the Will of God ; it is the best thing that happens to us that when we do the Will of God we are kept in the Peace of God, which passes all understanding.

As this was one of the early lessons in my own spiritual life, perhaps I may transcribe a few lines in which, a quarter of a century ago, I made a note of my observations on the point. You will find the following sentences in the chapter of “*Memoranda Sacra*,” which is headed “*The Sentinel of the Heart*” :—

“As the apostle says, Let the peace of God rule (*i.e.*, be arbiter or umpire) in your hearts. We may almost say that for most of us it is true that what we can do quietly we can do safely. . . . Some render the passage ‘The peace of God shall stand sentry over your heart.’ Where this sentry stands nothing forbidden can pass either within or without, except the watcher be first destroyed. If the thirst for wealth or fame enter into a man’s

[†] “In His Will is our Peace,”

heart, it is over the slain body of the sentry ; our peace is gone when these things enter in."

The general principle implied in this statement will be found to apply especially to the question of guidance. One takes a step or two down an uncertain path, and the unrest is back again in the heart that the Lord had pacified—a sure proof that we have missed the road. Or we find, on a new and untried path, from whose experience we shrunk back, a deeper and fuller measure than we have known before of the sense of Heavenly care and Divine comfort. It is all right : this is the way. Walk ye in it.

5. A supplementary suggestion was added to the foregoing simple rules of the Kingdom to the effect that it might be necessary sometimes to try the method of the Wet and Dry Fleece.

The illustration is taken from the Call of Gideon in the Book of Judges, and some one will immediately want to remind me that I said not long since that we must not expect much spiritual guidance from the Book of Judges. I agree that if we wanted to kill people, and believed God wanted us to kill them, and as many as possible, the Book of Judges would be a good place to look for light and leading. I only go there now for

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■ figure of speech which religious tradition has consecrated.

It is related that Gideon resolved the uncertainty of his call by means of a sign, according to which a fleece left in the threshing-floor was found one morning wet with dew, the ground itself being dry; while on another day the fleece was found dry and all the ground covered with dew; from which Gideon concluded—but, as the writer to the Hebrews says, “the time would fail me to tell of Gideon”! The question for us is the difficult one of asking guidance from the Lord by means of a sign, either to do or to forbear; or, better still, by a pair of signs, one of which says “do,” and the other “forbear.” Now it is not necessary that such a sign should be of the nature of a provoked and patent miracle. It may be nothing more than a fresh devotion of the heart to the Lord, accompanied by a little effort to embark on a doubtful and difficult course, or accompanied by a corresponding and associated effort not to embark on it. The attempt is made, doors open, peace is realised—we may call this “Fleece wet”; or the suggestion is resisted, the alternative pathway is blocked before us, and a veil comes down on the heart—we may call this

"Fleece dry." The verdict in the two cases is the same. The twofold oracle is valid, and the same thing happens if, when a forward move is taken, there is a backward pressure on the spirit ; or when a backward step is taken the retreat meets with approbation from the spiritual side. But this is not really a different method from that of the decision by means of the peace which passes understanding.

"Fleece wet" and "Fleece dry" really belong to an appeal made for a sign or token, or a pair of signs and tokens, from without ; concerning which we are of opinion that, while the method is not one to be commonly practised, there are cases in which we are entitled to ask for sign and for oracle, especially where our decisions may affect the conduct or the happiness of one or more other persons. It is not concerning such spiritual exigencies that our Lord says, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," and "There shall no sign be given to this corrupt generation." On the contrary, the determination to do the will of God, utterly and always, brings us into a region that is charged with oracle, and alive with intimations. And we are allowed, even though we are very stupid children, to

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tap the barometer sometimes for ourselves; and what is that but asking a sign from heaven? It is one thing to be able, with Abraham's servant, to say, "I was in the way and the Lord led me," a part of the experience that has no outward oracle; it is quite another thing for Eleazar to ask for a test as to whether this maiden with the pitcher on her shoulder and the sheep at her heels be the one that he was sent to fetch. And without discussing instances out of the legends of the past at too great length, we simply say that there are not a few situations in which we are entitled for an appeal to the Inward Oracle that it may become an Outward Oracle. And this does not mean, necessarily, want of faith in God. "Be not thou silent unto me, O God," says the Psalmist, "lest, if Thou be silent, I become like them that go down into the pit." That is a good prayer, and sure to be answered in a variety of wonderful ways.

However, it would be well to keep in mind that appeals of the kind to which we refer are not to be expected every day. They are not the highest form of the commerce between the soul and God. Let us look for a few moments in another direction, where there are no visible signs and tokens. What

are we to say of those who walk in the "dark night of faith," as the Mystics call it, neither asking for signs nor receiving them? We may say that they are in harmony with the rule, "We walk by faith, not by appearance"; they are in harmony with the prophet, who taught that "Whoso walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust himself in the Lord and stay himself upon his God"; they are in harmony with the poet who taught us that

"Faith is sweetest of worships to Him who so loves
His unbearable splendours in darkness to hide";

or with the one who said—

"When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the Heavenly Flame,
Then is the time to trust our God,
And stay upon His name."

And they fulfil the promise, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places." Our Lord expressed especial benedictions on those who believe without having seen. "Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." When such an one speaks of his dark night of faith he

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does not mean darkness such as others speak of. He is not numbered amongst those who say they have fellowship in Him and walk in darkness, and who lie and do not the truth. Their darkness only means their simple faith, which is sure of two things—that when it walks in deadly shade it need fear no evil ; and that, at the end of the days, when all valleys have been penetrated, all mountains scaled, and when the last of streams that separate between us and ours has been crossed, it will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

VI

THAT GUIDANCE IS TO BE EXPECTED IN THE MINISTRIES OF LOVE AND IN THE TESTIMONY OF TRUTH

THERE is a certain sense in which guidance is included in the covenanted rights of the individual believer ; for there is an equation made in the eighth chapter of Romans between those who are born of God and those who are led of the Spirit. Some will deduce the same doctrine from the parable in John, where we are told that when the Fair Shepherd has put forth *all* of His sheep, He walks before them, the sheep following Him, and recognising His voice. But this description is more like the guidance of a community than the leading of an individual, and some such direction of the whole family is to be expected, for Christ

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is the author of concord and of common obedience :

“One army of the Living God,
To His command we bow.”

The ancient records also come to our aid, by attaching the ministrations of the pillar of a flying flame to the motions of a community ; and although the later histories of the Christian Church seem, as a rule, to contradict the idea of a common guidance, it is one which we resolutely adhere to, however difficult its justification may be ; and we do not deny the difficulty. If we press the thought too hard and interpret it too rigidly it will open the door for a demonstration that the Spirit of God leads into error instead of into truth ; but if we hold it intelligently we shall find that both in the individual Christian experience and in the collective action of the Churches there is abundant evidence of an overshadowing Power. The Paraclete has not abandoned the Church because the Pope condemned Galileo or proclaimed himself infallible.

But, while these statements are capable of support from Scripture and from experience, we do not contradict them when we maintain

that both Scripture and experience advise us that guidance belongs to peculiar tempers and to special ministries. It would be superfluous to make an argument over this; it only needs to be stated. A loving soul is more certain of guidance than an unloving one; we must grow in guidance as we grow in grace; and since the growth in grace has its active as well as its passive manifestations, there will be services rendered to God and man which will be so strongly tinged with special leading that it will almost seem as if the person engaged in them had made a new and supplementary covenant with the Lord, over and above the ordinary rights of believing souls. Now, that such tempers as we speak of are really subject to the laws of blessing that we have intimated, may be seen from many luminous scriptures, which can only have been written by those who verified them first and wrote them down afterwards.

For example, there is a notable passage in Isaiah (whether that name denote a single bright star or a pair of companion stars, one of which is brighter than the other) in which we find it very clearly laid down that one of the conditions under which the Heavenly control is realised lies in a right relation to them that are without. The passage runs as

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follows (Isa. lviii. 10, 11): "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: *and the Lord shall guide thee continually*, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." In this beautiful passage it seems to me that we are invited into an experience which mirrors the very Incarnation itself. For what is Christ's own appearing amongst us but a drawing out of His soul to the hungry, and what is Christ's service to men, as explained by Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth, but a satisfying of afflicted souls? And although Christ's depth of descent is unique, and His oneness with human griefs peculiarly His own, He seldom fails to baptize those who are His near followers with some lustral drops from His own baptism, and to say to the eager and aspiring souls whose highest ambition is fellowship with Himself, that they shall indeed drink of His cup. And it is not surprising that even the distant approaches which we are able to make to this Divine Ideal should result in an increase of spiritual control over our thoughts and actions.

Now, if we look again at the language

which we quoted above from the prophet, we shall see that something of the same absorption into the cares, concerns, and sorrows of others is implied in one of the figures which are used to describe the blessedness of the guided soul. It is said to be like a watered garden! Now, this cannot be properly understood from a Western point of view. In this country gardens are watered with a hose or with a watering-pot; and if this were what is meant by the figure we should have to explain that God stands pledged to bestow graces and consolations upon those who have attempted to help and console others. This would be true, but not all the truth, nor, as I think, would it express the prophetic meaning. In the East gardens are watered by irrigation; if we wish to think of it on a large scale we may imagine to ourselves the Nile delta, or the cultivated land along the banks of the great river, which may be described as a succession of watered gardens; and the thing we have to notice is that, where a system of irrigation is in working order, the gardens are watered one from the other, as well as all of them from the river. That which flows over my seed plot or through it flows off to enrich some other man's sowing, and may indeed have come

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to my land from some other man's acre. And what is true on a great scale, as we see with the Nile, is true on a smaller scale with all the irrigated lands of the East. Each one of them constitutes what I may call a part of a venous system, the totality of them has an arterial nexus. In this sense, then, we may understand the promise about the watered garden, as well as that other statement, closely connected with it, that the one who waters others shall be watered also himself; the beneficent stream will flow through his land, but it will always flow over it as well. Now, in the doctrine of Isaiah the way to the common weal is through the common woe. We are to recognise the veins of the common humanity, and not to think too much of our own separate fortune; for we being many are one body; we are connected in a circulatory system by veins of sorrow and arteries of good.

One of the ways in which we may come to understand this oneness, and to experience the covenanted guidance which the Head bestows upon the members, is to attach ourselves to some form or other of the ministry which love renders to grief. For example, if we were studying the explanation of St. Paul's personal experience (and who is

there that will not recognise how splendidly irrigated the garden of that great soul was?), we should find that certain statements acquire an extraordinary prominence ; they appear to us as keys actually inserted in the locks and only waiting to be turned ; as we turn them the life of the man becomes intelligible. For instance, it has often been pointed out that much of St. Paul's success can be traced back directly to his first Christian question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and to the lifelong answer that the Lord kept giving him. But then there are other equally penetrating confessions or statements ; there is, for instance, that flight of his aspiring soul, according to which he affirms that he fills up the deficit of Christ's sufferings for His body's sake, which is the Church—a startling statement, but one which is supported by other references to the fellowship of His sufferings. Then there is another sentence, which seems to me to explain the whole round of the Pauline activity more than any other passage in the Epistles, in which he breaks out into the question, "Who is weak, and I am not weak ; who is afflicted, and I do not burn?" If we define our "great humans" by the standard of Isaiah, that they draw out their soul to hungry souls, and satisfy afflicted

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souls, we must admit that Paul, at all events, was a "great human." The spirit and temper which he thus exhibits (and remember it is this peculiar spirit, which is weak with the weak and burning along with the afflicted, which is the spirit of which guidance is predicated) may be seen in modern language in a very noble sonnet of Lowell's, which I will transcribe, with some elucidatory italics. It is addressed to Wendell Phillips, the abolitionist—

" He stood upon the world's broad threshold : wide
The din of battle and of slaughter rose :
He saw God stand upon the weaker side
That sank in seeming loss before its foes :
Many there were who made great haste and sold
Unto the cunning enemy their swords.
He scorned their gifts of fame, and power, and gold,
And underneath their soft and flowery words
Heard the cold serpent hiss : therefore he went
And humbly joined him to the weaker part,
Fanatic named and fool, yet well content
So he could be the nearer to God's heart
And feel its solemn pulses sending blood
Through all the widespread veins of endless good."

Here, then, we have again the figure of the irrigated soul, with the physiological counterpart of the watered garden ; the sonnet may be regarded as a versification

of two or three of the clauses quoted from Isaiah.

The statement that Divine guidance is to be expected in the ministries of love may be illustrated by a little incident.

A dear friend of ours, whose bright Christian experience is a continual exhilaration to all who know her, was one day going townwards on an errand of some kind, when she felt herself impelled in the spirit to turn down another road. She had not gone far when she came across a poor, degraded, drunken woman whom she had been in the habit of visiting and whom she had tried to help out of her many sorrows and sins. The wretched woman came up to her and confessed that she had been on the point of throwing herself into the canal, but that she had come up the road in question under the feeling that she would perhaps meet on the way the friend who had tried to influence and help her. It need hardly be said that the retrospect of that obedience to the voice of the Inward Monitor, which led our friend down the very road where she was wanted, has been not only a permanent stimulus to her own faith and love, but has also furnished an object-lesson to others who desire to realise increasing helpfulness to others by

an increasing sense of the presence of the Lord with us, to direct us and to make use of us. And it must be true that when we are trying to help others with ministries of love, we are not acting apart from God, and may expect to find ministrations of the Paraclete to ourselves.

I pass on to enunciate the second half of the statement at the head of the chapter, that guidance is to be expected in the service of truth.

The possession of the truth and the impartation of the truth are two very different things. Even if we had all truth, we should still stand in need of the Holy Spirit; and if we enjoy a Johannine sense that "the truth is with us, and shall be with us for ever," this is in itself a corollary to our Lord's promise that the Comforter should abide with His own for ever. The Christian does not attain truth apart from the Spirit of truth nor communicate it effectively except as One greater than himself works in him mightily. Our Lord's own teaching was characterised by a listening attitude as well as by gracious utterance. Hence He tells us, concerning His own preaching, that (*a*) He did not speak of Himself; (*b*) that the Father told Him what to say; (*c*) that He said it as it was

told to Him (see John xii. 49, 50). And the humility of Jesus is never spectacular nor merely theological ; it is intimately related to our own obedience and to our personal humility, according to the injunction that the same mind should be in us that was in Him, and a number of similar spiritual advices.

The service of truth, of which we are speaking, is subject to laws of degeneration of its own. Preaching may be at one time pointed, it often, on the contrary, becomes dull ; it may be aimed rightly—that is, at the heart ; on the other hand, it often misses the easier mark of the head. Most preachers have to solace themselves with the doctrine of the practical man, that it is the hits that count and not the misses. The spiritual man aspires after an experience which is intimated in a letter of one of the early Quaker apostles, who reported that “we hit some *every time we shoot*, because our bow abides in strength.” Some may be content with scoring an occasional success : the true prophet aspires after a communion with the Lord, according to which his Master will be with him and *let none of his words fall to the ground*, although he knows that this means not only previous instruction, but also

a wary walking and a constant watching. The question whether praying breath is ever spent in vain may be an open question; there can, however, be no doubt as to the statement that much of preaching breath consists in beating the air. One may say of it, according to the well-known epigram—

“Right and left his arrows fly,
But what they aim at, no one dreameth”;

but this cannot be true of guided preachers: they are master bowmen and cleave the mark, or, as the Friends say, “they reach the witness in others,” or, as Paul puts it, “they commend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” If the aimless part of our archery be subtracted, what remains? The answer is, the guided part of the same. And our aspiration is after the reduction of the aimless part to zero; this can only take place as the influence of the Spirit becomes predominant in our testimony, and then we shall experience the meaning of the saying, that “the Paraclete shall bear witness of Me; and ye also because ye have been with Me.”

VII

THAT GUIDANCE IS UNTIL DEATH AND UNTO GLORY

WE are advised by the Scriptures—that is, by the experienced and observant souls of the past—to regard the Divine direction of our lives as a permanent possession of which we can always affirm that it is ours. Hence one expressed it as follows: “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death”; and another one, gathering up into the closing music of a great psalm the harmony which he had beaten out of much perplexity and tribulation, and confessing that there was no rival in earth or heaven to dispute the sway over his heart with the Lord, declared also his faith that God would “guide him with His counsel, and afterward receive him to glory.”

Now, I am not going to enter into a disser-

tation upon the Perseverance of the Saints, but we may say, without venturing into contentious areas, that whatever the perseverance of the saints may mean, the guidance of the saints must be one of the things that persevere; and that can be expressed in another manner by saying that the Perseverance of the Saints is due to the Perseverance of the Saviour. At this point I hear the saints in both worlds concurring with me. They say, "The Lamb feeds us and leads us," and "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and "We have such an High Priest"; and others respond with the words, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me."

And it seems clear that this cannot be contradicted by the fact that the Invisible Hand is steadily and unwaveringly directing us into the quarter of the arena where the last enemy is ambushed and ready for our approach. For if we are certain that He has delivered our soul from death, we are equally sure that He is delivering our body unto it. The guidance until death has therefore a double character, according as we reflect upon our undoubted mortality

or our coveted share of the "wages of going on."

Now, to be told in so many words that our Lord is guiding us and steering us until death and into it, has something which seems to be a contradiction in terms. For how, we may ask, can the kindly light guide us into the unkindly dark? We feel like saying, as soon as the statement is made, "Far from the kindly light be such an unkindly deed!" The doctrine seems to come with the force of a *reductio ad absurdum* at the close of the hypothesis of good guidance upon which our faith is working; death is the reduction to absurdity of the guidance of living souls by a living, though invisible, Friend. And we are bound, in duty to ourselves as well as to others, to ask whether we were right in thus setting down the unkindly dark as the goal of the kindly light.

Now I know that by many moderns (and even by some irreligious people) the response would readily be made that the dark is not really unkindly. The cessation from existence is not really painful; we ought not to label the Power that overrules us as unkindly, because it informs us that the time is come when we are to cease to be. But then, on the same hypothesis, neither should we be

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entitled to use the label "kindly" with regard to the life that draws to an ending, for if all judgment as to the proper adjective to use is to be gathered from the present life, and none of it from the next, we can only say that the adjectives finally selected will not be taken from the vocabularies of either Faith or Hope. It is better, therefore, to say with Browning—

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had trouble enough, for one";

but in saying this we can no more read a pantheistic sense into the lines than we find ourselves able to do with the Scriptures or the Creeds. And after we have said it we must go back to the expression, "unkindly dark," and accept it, instead of trying to explain it away. When we have accepted it we shall perhaps see our way to some further elucidations; and as to the propriety of accepting it, my own judgment is (and I am much nearer to dissolution than when I first believed, and have lived through many traditional illusions with regard to both life and death) that I have no hesitation in saying that, while I hope my fear of death has passed away under the enchantment of

Christ's triumph, the fact of death is increasingly distasteful and repulsive. I am far from saying that this is the final experience. But then I do not regard death (and never have regarded it) as a *terminus*, but more and more as a starting-point. That is to say, to use the pedantic language of the chronologists, it is a *terminus a quo* and not a *terminus ad quem*. Or, since most people think of a *terminus* as the end of a railroad or tram-car route, Death is not the end of a railroad, but the station just in front of a tunnel through which the railroad passes. And perhaps this really describes it as well as it can be described, the unkindly dark being a necessary incident on passing through an intervening mountain wall into a sunnier land upon the other side. Here we have substituted a phrase for the one which is common upon Christian lips; for where they speak of a passage through the veil, we are speaking of a pilgrimage under the mountain; and while they are speaking of a dark minute which is at end, suddenly and apocalyptically, we are speaking of what is more like a *mauvais quart d'heure*. Those who have made the passage of the St. Gothard railway from north to south will know pretty well what we are trying to say, especially if they

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have found Italy in sunshine after leaving Switzerland in snow.

If this way of looking at the matter is right, then we ought not to separate the guidance until death from the guidance into glory. They were not separated in our Lord's experience, and therefore they may not be separated in ours. The prophecies foretold and conjoined the sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the apostle, in drawing attention to this fact, advises us to arm ourselves with a similar mind. That does not merely mean a willingness to co-suffer, but an expectation of being conglorified (if we may use the striking and original words of St. Paul in the eighth chapter of Romans).

But this leads us to a further point ; for if, in consequence of the continuity of the two worlds, we have been led to amend our view of death, so as to turn it from a *cul-de-sac* into a tunnel, and from a blind alley into a covered way, we ought also not to forget that we need to have our ideas rectified not only with regard to what we are being led through, but also with regard to what we are being led into. I suppose all living members of Christ go through a reformation of ideas as to what God has prepared for them that love Him,

and the more they love Him the more gladly do they submit to the reformation of which we speak. Just as in the case of death, they go through an experience of determining what it is not, and then through an experience of exploring what it is. Bit by bit they come to co-ordinate their thoughts of the two worlds until, perhaps, they reach a point where, if death could be neglected, the one life would flow into the other as simply and naturally as a river flows into the sea. And even when they remember that death has to be allowed for, they treat it as if it were a kind of theological Janus with two faces, one of which is that of our last enemy, the other that of our best friend. They begin to talk of the next world as their own country, and to get out of the fashion of the country which has ceased to have the first claim upon their attention. They begin to understand what the writer to the Hebrews meant by "declaring plainly that we are seeking our fatherland." And many strong consolations are absorbed from the legacies of wayfaring men of olden time, who wrote down their hopes and their faith for us to study. For we cannot be wrong in the supposition that the understanding of which we speak is a mutual understanding. Our friends

who precede us are like the Lord Himself in this, that they are at least as much interested on their side of the partition as we are on ours; their care is a reflection of His care, as their lesser glories are the shadow of His great Glory. Those who love us are lost and found in the Love that passeth knowledge, and the goal of all the saints is not the saints, but the King of Saints. Both worlds are made one in Him.

"Friends watch us who have touched the goal;
They urge us, Come up higher:
With them shall rest our way-sore feet,
With them is built our home;
With Christ: they sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb."

Thus the comfortable words of the Scripture define the attitude which we ought to take with regard to our tarriance in this world and our citizenship in the other, an attitude which is affirmed to be normal in a healthy Christian experience, "for these all confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and certainly not an attitude which is to be taken up merely on the death-days of the children of God, or on the commemorations of the same; an attitude which is described in such vigorous and

healthy speech that one feels at once how wide a gulf separates the strenuous soul of the writer to the Hebrews from the sentimentalism which characterises so much of our modern literature with regard to the life to come, and which is phenomenal in some of the worst hymns which the Christian Church insists on singing. If the sentences in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which describe our pilgrimage and suggest our destiny, convey an impression which is not over-coloured of the legitimate and natural other-worldliness of the primitive Christians, we must allow that they regarded themselves, *tanquam migraturos*, as a race of people, like St. Paul when preaching at Troas, ready to depart on the morrow. We view the Church of that day much in the same way as we watch the swallows in autumn, as they gather upon the telegraph-wires, or sweep backwards and forwards past our windows, while they communicate with one another concerning the following of the sun southward ; and by their very unsettlement at the first breath of winter cold, these birds declare themselves to be the most rational of God's creatures, who have come to the conclusion that they must be seeking a better country and that they must be seeking it together. One can hardly

watch their preparations without entering afresh into Faber's prayer, "Oh! that we might die in pairs or companies." If we might pass away together into that land of sunshine! If all the militant host might cross the flood at once, and all the tents on this side Jordan be finally folded on one elect morning of redeemed souls!

"But wisest fate says 'No!
This must not yet be so.'"

And the refusal of what seems to be the most natural and reasonable of wishes, as it lies in the nature of things, must also be involved in the wisdom of things. We may consider the fowls of the air, we as birds of passage studying birds of passage; but, when we have considered them rightly, the outcome of the consideration ought to be the Master's question, "Are ye not much better than they?" And that limits the amount that we may learn from them. The solitary flight may be better for us, for the simple reason that we are better than they.

Still, we may learn from the swallow her parable; for, if our Lord taught us to watch the fig-tree that knows the summer is near, we cannot be wrong in watching also that sister spirit with wings that knows the winter

is coming. And, as we watch them, we learn to lay aside some errors, both with regard to them and to ourselves. We remember, for the folk-lore of the country still retains the opinion, how it used to be believed in this country that all winter long the swallows lay torpid at the bottom of ponds and pools, huddled together in the most uncomfortable and impossible of hibernations. And we remember too how the folk-lore of Christian Churches (for it must be folk-lore, and not faith) still persists that some whom we love, and whom Christ has loved so much more than ourselves as to insist on taking them out of our embrace into His own, are still lying either at the bottom of tombs, or, at all events, in some state of suspended animation only comparable to the swallows at the bottom of the muddy and frozen pools and swamps! Imagine the friends, whose activity, when with us, we remember so well, become idle or comatose, or in a state of suspended animation! Dear birds, you have been misunderstood: we have ourselves seen you dashing round the towers of the earthly Jerusalem at the very season when you were supposed to be hibernating; and the Crusaders ought to have set us right on that point seven hundred years ago. Dear saints of God, you

too have been wrongly located and ill imagined. You who were so busy here must be active there ; happy here, you have not sunk into listlessness yonder.

“I see you walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days ;
My days that are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.”

We are sure of your felicity, beloved ; of the felicity of our special saints ; of the blessedness of all saints. What perplexes us sometimes is why we have to wait for so long years to see and share it, and why we have to be parted as a preliminary to entering upon that perfect well-being. To take the matter away from our own experiences and their necessary personal equations, why must John be so long separated from the heart near which he had lain ? He and Christ were young together : why will his Lord not want him for sixty long and weary years ? Why must James and John, who in the Gospel behave so like twins, be torn asunder by a gulf of half a century, and both of them, to whom the Covenant of Grace had promised to drink of Christ's cup, find the cup so long in reaching their end of the table ? To John it must have seemed as if it were never

coming his way. Why must Mary and Martha, who have gone through the bitterness of death once, over Lazarus, have to wait for some further series of family dislocations and separations? Did they not all three know all that was to be known on the subject of death and life? Now, these are not sceptical questions; they are love questions. We are sensible of the absence of our beloved when God takes them, and we naturally ask why Providence and Grace insist to us that this removal, and its attached delay in reunion, is the right way, and that, "if it had not been so, I would have told you"?

There are two reasons, at all events, which stand out prominently for the Christian soul to consider, as he reflects upon the delay which marks the stages of his homeward journey. One is the Pauline reason, that we cannot be spared from this world while God has an unfulfilled service for us in it. That was a grand soul which, solicited by two such forces, two such tensions of love, one calling him hence and the other bidding him stay, knew how to make the election between them, and surrendered to earth as having, for the present, at any rate, stronger claims than Heaven. "I am perplexed," he says; "I feel the pull this way and that way. I can sigh

my soul very soon into the bosom of God, if I leave off wanting to live: but to abide in the flesh for the sake of the children of God has more claims for me." And so the prayer "Let me stay" held down and stifled the prayer "Let me go"; and the former mounted up and nestled in the will of God, while the other went to sleep in the man's heart until the elect time should come.

The second reason for our tarriance here, when so many of our beloved are passing over, lies in the fact that we have not yet perfectly caught the pilgrim manner; and, until we have caught it, we shall not perfectly appreciate the ways of the City. To be at home in the body or in the world is to be out of touch with the City, and absent from the Lord.

This brings us back again to the doctrine of the Hebrews to which we referred above. They declare plainly that they are seeking their Fatherland. They declare it more plainly for every day of the search, for every night of the accomplished homeward march. It may be said of Christ's lovers, as is said in the song in "Hamlet"—

"How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon."

"Be shod," said He, "with sandals!" Do you suppose He was only talking to the Seventy, or to the Twelve? Only addressing a missionary meeting? Not saying over all of us, "Are they not all missionary spirits? Are they not all pilgrim souls?" That little verse which I quote, describing the marks of the lover that is on pilgrimage, describes those marks progressively: they are not all gained at once. These sandal shoes were, indeed, put on at the very beginning; but this shell in the hat, that was picked up on the shore of a certain Red Sea which lay by the pilgrim's path; and this staff that he carries was cut on the banks of the Jordan when he descended to it. He steadied himself with it as he passed through. He keeps thousands of miles of travel in his remembrance by that shell and this staff. And so, brave soul that hast consented to be a pilgrim of the Kingdom, know this, that thy definition becomes clearer as the years go by, and thou art more perfectly known as belonging to that heaven-born, heaven-bound company, of whom the most earnest speak like one who once willed to make an earthly pilgrimage, and being asked what he wanted said, "I am nought, I have nought, I desire nought, except to be at Jerusalem." And let it be an accepted

reason for the continuance of the pilgrimage that the signs and tokens of that high calling are becoming deeper engraved upon life and look as the days go by. When our detachment is complete, our summons will not be far distant.

Do you remember the beautiful passage in St. Augustine's "Confessions," in which he and his mother talk together of the joys and glories of another world? I am going to transcribe it, in order that we may enter into something of the same spiritual exercise, the same detachment, the same attachment. It runs as follows:—

"The day now approaching whereon she was to depart this life (which day Thou well knewest, we knew not), it came to pass, Thyself, as I believe, by Thy secret ways so ordering it, that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, which looked into the garden of the house where we now lay, at Ostia : there, removed from the din of men, we were recruiting from the fatigue of a long journey, for the voyage.

"We were discoursing, then, together, alone, very sweetly ; and forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were enquiring between ourselves in the presence of

the Truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the Saints was to be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man. . . .

“And when our discourse was brought to that point, that the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, was, in respect to the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention ; we, raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection towards the Self-Same, did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heaven, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth : yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing and discourse and admiring of Thy works ; and we came to our own minds and went beyond them, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the Wisdom by whom all these things were made, both what have been and what shall be and she herself is not made, but is, as she hath been, and so shall she be ever ; yea, rather, to ‘have been,’ and ‘hereafter to be,’ are not in her, but only ‘to be,’ seeing she is eternal. And while we were thus discoursing and panting after her, we slightly touched her with the

whole effort of our hearts . . . and we sighed . . . and returned to vocal expressions of our mouth where the word has beginning and end. . . .

“We were saying then : If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth and waters and air, hushed also the poles of heaven ; yea, the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking upon self surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition, since if any could hear, all these say, ‘We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever ;’ if then, having uttered this, these too should be hushed, having only roused our ears to Him that made them, that we may hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor Angel’s voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear Him whom in these things we love, might hear His very self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom, which abideth over all) : could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish and absorb and wrap up its beholder amid these inward

joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding, . . . were not this to 'enter into our Master's joy'?"

Let us now consider, with St. Augustine and his mother, what the life of the saints will be, and consider it, as they did, very lovingly. Augustine found his opportunity for the contemplation in the fact that God knew (though he did not) that the time of his mother's departure was at hand. Looking back over that day from the vantage-ground of a later day, he saw why it was that on that day they looked out of the windows at Ostia, and in at the windows of heaven. It would have been a good exercise for loving souls, even apart from the special Providence. It is Samuel Rutherford who gives the advice, in writing to a friend, "Go up beforehand and see your lodging. Look through all your Father's rooms in heaven. Men take a sight of the lands ere they buy them. I know that Christ hath made the bargain already; but be kind to the house ye are going to, and see it often." Rutherford's quaint language is a recommendation to us to get into touch as soon as possible with the world to which we are hastening, and which belongs to us in a way that the present world does not.

But it will be replied that precisely there

lies the difficulty. We are told to see it often, when our true confession hesitates whether we have seen it at all. Even in St. Augustine's case the circumstances were peculiarly favourable; and yet the vision was described as one moment of understanding! When I say they were favourable, I mean that both he and his mother were in situations that lend themselves to the perception of the unseen world. They were resting after a journey; they were preparing for another (consciously for Africa, unconsciously, so far as Monica was concerned, for Paradise); and this lull in life was the very situation for a vision. There was a resting time, a breathing space; Ostia that day was like Cesarea in the outward life of the apostle, when he went ashore and revived his spirits by the spirits of others, and then, as Wiclif puts it, "trussed up his fardels" and went up to Jerusalem.

As is the earthly journey, so is the heavenly, except that, thank God, we have less to carry. And so we may say that Augustine and Monica were favourably placed that day for seeing the spires and glories of the Heavenly City. More than that, Nature was at their side; she spread the sea at their feet, and whispered, "Children, look across!" To look out to a sea, or to look across one, is of itself

an oracle of the Kingdom. Even Southampton Water turned to gospel when Isaac Watts looked across it, and began to sing to himself, and for the whole family on earth, of

“ Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood.”

And Ostia is at least as sacred as Southampton. They also looked lovingly across the water.

Well, you say, they saw what they wanted ; but it is only a minute's vision, suddenly flashed, quickly withdrawn. And what does Rutherford mean by saying we should often be visiting our house which is in heaven ?

In answer to such a question, we have one or two brief considerations. First of all, withdraw the mind from anything spectacular, anything of star or flower, anything of gold or gems, any glories that even Scripture language may suggest on the natural side ; do what St. Augustine and his mother did, in laying aside everything that is of the nature of the dark riddle of a similitude, and, having silenced them and left them aloof, you will begin to observe a residuum upon which faith can concentrate itself. Leave off trying to be ecstatic over “ bulwarks with salvation strong, and streets of shining gold.” Stop

for a little time the unintelligible talk about "fields of glory and the jasper sea." Then watch what remains. One great fact comes to light—that we are pressing on towards an inhabited country, and that when Rutherford talks about seeing our mansion, and that frequently, he must be taken to mean that we are to think often of the people who have preceded us, and try to keep in touch with them. Otherwise his advice would amount to this, "Go into an immense congregation of beautiful houses of which a great part are uninhabited, and see how you like them, and which of them is to be yours." An impossible exercise! Whereas it should be an exercise of faith to fix our thoughts upon inhabited houses in that Kingdom; that is to say, not upon houses, but upon inhabitants. Then we may say of the whole city that

"The saints build up its fabric,
But the corner-stone is Christ."

And, if the saints build up its fabric, there is no need for anything spectacular or anything Oriental. The vision will take care of itself, if the beloveds are there, and not only are they there, but many of them have been there a long while. They are old inhabitants

of the city. There is no need any longer to check the thought of our farewells by the compensating thought of the welcomes upon the other side. At their first entrance it is proper enough to talk, as Milton does in "Lycidas," of what the first hours in heaven are like :

"There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

But all this soon passes ; and we cannot and ought not to, dwell upon it. Our beloveds are become now a part of the life of the place. Think what that means ; and, as their eyes are no longer dazzled with splendour, nor our eyes any longer dimmed with tears, let us use the opportunity furnished by the thought of them so as to make it, in Augustine's language, "a moment of understanding."

Last of all, let us remember that if they have become a part of the life of the place, there is One who is peculiarly the Life itself. There is this difference between the Old Testament view of the life to come, and that which is suggested in the New Testament,

that, while in the former we are encouraged to believe that we should be received into glory, in the latter it is promised that "I will come again and receive you unto Myself!"

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